Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Centre syndical et patronal du Canada

Towards Understanding Business, Labour and Sector Council Needs and Challenges Related to Enhanced Language Training

Final Report

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Enhanced Language Training Initiative

Our mission

is to contribute to economic growth and social well being by improving business and labour practices in Canada, and by providing joint advice on public policy.

For fifteen years, we have been the recognized centre for business-labour dialogue and consensus building in the country. When labour and business find common ground and agree on practical, problem solving approaches, things happen. We have the case studies and information to back that up.

Whether exploring new work arrangements in Canadian workplaces, or analyzing human resources issues in different sectors of the economy; examining mechanisms for financing businesses and thus promoting employment and community development, or surveying Canadian private and public sector leaders about their priorities and concerns: our work always features the joint perspectives of business and labour.

Notre mission

Contribuer à la croissance économique et au mieux-être social en améliorant des pratiques patronales et syndicales au Canada et en donnant des conseils conjoints sur la politique publique.

Depuis quinze ans, nous sommes reconnus comme le centre du dialogue et de l'élaboration d'un consensus entre le patronat et et les syndicats au Canada. Lorsque le patronat et les syndicats trouvent un terrain d'entente sur des solutions pratiques à des problèmes, les choses avancent. Nous avons des études de cas et des données pour le démontrer.

Qu'il s'agisse de la recherche de nouveaux régimes de travail dans les milieux de travail canadiens ou de l'analyse de questions relatives aux ressources humaines dans divers secteurs de l'économie; de l'examen des mécanismes de financement des entreprises et donc de la promotion de l'emploi et du développement communautaire, ou encore d'enquêtes auprès des dirigeants canadiens des secteurs privé et public sur leurs priorités et leurs préoccupations, nos travaux présentent toujours la vision concertée du patronat et des syndicats.

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Executive Summary

Established in 1984, the Canadian Labour and Business Centre (CLBC) is a leading national organization for research and dialogue on skills and human resources issues. As an independent multipartite labour, management, government, and education organization, the CLBC is well positioned to facilitate a dialogue on key skills issues.

The CLBC received support from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) for a development project under the Enhanced Language Training (ELT) initiative. This project had three objectives:

- To identify, understand, and analyse the needs, barriers, and challenges facing sector councils, business, and labour with respect to occupation-specific language training, and to assess current capacity to support the delivery of ELT.
- To identify models, best practices, and approaches in delivering both occupation-specific language training and Canadian work experience programs that can illustrate how some industry needs are already being met effectively.
- To work in partnership with workplace stakeholders to identify key considerations for developing realistic, practical, and valid approaches to occupation-specific language training that can be used by CIC, by provinces and territories, and by community-based language-training providers.

To carry out the project, 35 interviews were conducted with key stakeholders from across Canada, who represented business, labour, sector councils, language providers, and government officials. The perspectives of sector councils were more deeply probed with a survey and a subsequent focus group with several of the councils.

The investigation revealed that, acting on their own, it would be very difficult for individual employers to avail themselves of the ELT initiative, which provides for higher-level language training or occupation-specific language training. Sector councils may potentially become involved along the lines of a model that emulates what is used in regulated professions, that is, the presence of a coordinating body that can interface between employers, language providers and immigrant-serving agencies to provide language training and Canadian work experience training.

The theme heard most consistently from stakeholders was the importance of making it easy for employers and for workers, and that approaches that achieve this appear to be working well. For example, government fieldworkers in Manitoba are available to assist employers in identifying needs and establishing language training programs. These fieldworkers are active in their communities, not only by promoting language and literacy training, but also by promoting the services to employers through individual visits and presentations, and by facilitating the development of programs and practitioners. In effect, there is a single window for assistance with language issues in the workplace.

Similarly, sector councils are indicating that they are in a position to make it easier for employers and workers to undertake workplace language training initiatives. They are in a good position to

utilize ELT resources to develop their own sector-specific language training programs. However, sector councils would place language training as an issue low on their agendas and so will not likely move to develop their own programs.

Context-based language training was also found to work well. This does not just mean language training that utilizes workplace material, but also requires recognizing the nature of the workplace, providing support to supervisors and co-workers, and integrating language skills into all workplace training.

We found that good practice rose above some of the distinctions imposed by governments. While federal government programs are only available to immigrants, best practices in the workplace were programs provided to all workers regardless of immigration status. Another notable finding was that "good practice" was generally considered to be something more than what the federal government presently sets forth as its criteria for language programs.

The study findings indicate that concerted effort is needed to coordinate with workplace stakeholders. This will include outreach and raising awareness with a sound business case for becoming involved in workplace language training. We have seen that, in some communities such as Ottawa and Toronto, initiatives that fully involve business and labour have been successful in putting language and immigration on the agenda.

Since the changes in funding programs in the 1990s, fewer workplace language practitioners have remained active in the field, and consequently significant professional development is needed to bring practitioners up-to-speed on working with workplace stakeholders to deliver language training in the workplace. CIC is in an excellent position to organize this type of training, which should be developed in partnership with business, labour, and sector councils to ensure an effective presentation of the workplace perspective.

A system that provides language training based on individual need would be more effective than one based on time limits or immigration status. The present system, which provides lower level language training to immigrants who have landed within the past three years and higher-level language training only to immigrants, targets only two of the groups in need of support. Many second language speakers in Canadian workplaces in need of language training are not eligible primarily because they have become citizens, or are at a lower level then required for ELT.

The ELT initiative is better suited to the needs of the regulatory bodies, industry associations, sector councils, and providers of language training for unemployed immigrants. The most effective employer contribution in this context is not only advice on workplace aspects of the training, but also work placements. The ELT initiative can also be effective in addressing shortages in specific sectors, which can be filled by recruiting foreign-trained workers.

Overall, the ELT initiative, as currently designed, will not meet the needs of individual employers. However, working with business and labour organizations, the initiative can be used to support employers experiencing skill shortages on a regional or sectoral basis.

1 Introduction

1.1 Project Background

In the fall of 2003, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) issued a call for proposals for the Enhanced Language Training (ELT) component of the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP). With an allocation of $25 million over five years, CIC was tasked with coordinating the development and delivery of labour market levels of language training outside of Quebec. The purpose of the ELT initiative was defined as follows:

- Provide language training at Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)[1] levels 7–10 to immigrants with basic or intermediate English or French skills, but who require higher levels of language proficiency;
- Provide job-specific language training to enable immigrants to find and retain employment commensurate with their qualifications and skills.

1.2 The Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Established in 1984, the CLBC is a leading organization for research and dialogue on skills and human resources issues. As an independent national labour/management organization, CLBC's board of directors includes equal representation from business and labour and is presently co-chaired by Perrin Beatty, President, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, and by Kenneth Georgetti, President, Canadian Labour Congress. Also on the board are senior representatives from the education sector as well as the federal, provincial, and territorial governments. In carrying out its unique mandate, the CLBC has earned the trust and support of its constituency, and has successfully brought together major labour market partners to address key issues of mutual concern.

Director of Business, Derwyn Sangster, and Senior Researcher, Brigid Hayes, led the research team for this project. Providing additional support were Senior Researcher, Clarence Lochhead, Research Analysts Michael Sebold and Alex Stephens, Office and Communications Assistant, Aaron Chapman, Operations Assistant, Leslie Milligan, and Director of Operations and Financial Services, Monique Lefebvre.

1.3 Proposal and Objectives

The CLBC's proposal, as approved by CIC, outlined the following three objectives:

1. To identify, understand, and analyse the needs, barriers, and challenges facing sector councils, business, and labour with respect to occupation-specific language training, and to assess current capacity to support the delivery of ELT.

[1] Please see the Glossary at the conclusion of this report for a detailed description of the Canadian Language Benchmarks.

2. To identify models, best practices, and approaches that can illustrate how some industry needs are already being met effectively in the delivery of both occupation-specific language training and Canadian work experience programs.

3. To identify key considerations for the development, in partnership with workplace stakeholders, of practical, valid approaches to occupation-specific language training for use by CIC, provinces and territories, and community-based language-training providers.

The project began with a needs analysis to address questions such as:

- What are the needs, challenges, and barriers to enhanced language training?
- What are the specific issues related to small and medium size enterprises?
- What does industry need in terms of knowledge development?
- To what extent is industry aware of the issues and the resources?
- How can occupation-specific language training support issues such as job placement?
- How does language training fit with the recognition of credentials?
- What is industry currently doing?
- What are the models? For example, is language training part of workplace learning, or is it an assumed skill acquired outside of the workplace?
- How are employers best engaged in order to develop a realistic plan?

The project then explored best practices and focused on understanding the roles of business, labour, and sector councils in providing ELT in the workplace.

Throughout the project, the CLBC received support and advice from CIC officials: Rosaline Frith, Director General, Integration; Althea Williams, Senior Policy Advisory, Policy and Programs, Settlement; and Stephanie Peck, Program Officer, Settlement.

2 Methodology

2.1 January 12th ELT Workshop

On January 12, 2004, the CLBC delivered a presentation to introduce its project at CIC's ELT workshop in Toronto, which was also a forum for informal feedback from many key players.

Roundtable discussions about the role of employers in the delivery of ELT provided valuable insights. Language providers noted a practice prevalent with many employers, whereby people from the same language group are hired and assigned to a supervisor or lead-hand from the same language group; thus, language issues in their workplace are avoided and left unaddressed. Other comments underscored the need to address issues such as work culture, racism and discrimination, and the heterogeneous structure of "immigrants" as a group.

Employers were perceived by many of the language providers as unconvinced of the business case for hiring immigrants or for improving their skills. Credential assessment and training are seen as cost-centres, and some participants felt that, without subsidies, employers would shun

workplace language training. The need for increased awareness among employers and greater support for hiring and training of immigrants was a persistent message throughout the day.

The session also clarified how regulatory bodies are moving ahead with bridging and fast-tracking initiatives aimed at foreign trained professionals. The regulatory bodies themselves are acting as the language provider and facilitator of work placements among various constituent employers – a model that might be the best fit for sector councils.

Several participants indicated that employers should use the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) to describe workplace language requirements. Employers are frequently unable to provide accurate descriptions of their requirements, and resort to a subjective evaluation, based on pronunciation and cultural attributes, of applicants' language skills. Application of the CLB to define language requirements, in the same way that Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) benchmarked occupations according to the nine essential skills, would greatly facilitate the process of matching actual skill levels to requirements.

The session helped to clarify also the differences between the various language training programs such as Language of Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), the former CIC program Labour Market Language Training (LMLT), and the new ELT program. In addition, provincial government officials responsible for language training provided a better understanding of the federal/provincial dimensions of the issue.

Based on the context provided by this session, a detailed work plan and a list of key informants were developed to guide the work.

2.2 Preliminary Expert Consultations

Both the Canadian Centre for Language Benchmarks (CCLB) and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) were consulted for advice and support.

Pauline MacNaughton, Executive Director, CCLB, provided her perspective on the Canadian Language Benchmarks and CCLB's ELT-related projects. As an advisor, Ms. MacNaughton provided advice and comments throughout the project. To forge a link between the sector councils and the CCLB, questions on the CLB's were included on the sector council survey.

Terry Anne Boyles, Vice-President, Advocacy and Public Affairs, ACCC, provided insights with respect to ACCC's working group on immigration issues relating to colleges – including ESL and FSL training. The ACCC's Anna Toneguzzo also provided insight into the roles of the community colleges. First-hand accounts of community colleges' activities in relation to immigration issues were gathered at the ACCC immigration roundtable in early March.

2.3 Statistical Overview and Literature Review

In order to gain a good macro level understanding, statistical information was compiled on immigration and language issues. Particular emphasis was placed on industry leaders' attitudes towards immigration and on data that facilitated a better understanding of the issues from an occupational and industry perspective.

While a formal literature review was not in the original proposal, CLBC did collect data on language training programs in various jurisdictions and examples of innovative practices. Some of this material informed the analysis, and both the statistical overview and the literature review provided important context.

2.4 Key Informants

During the early weeks of the project, a list of key informants was compiled for three interviews in each category: sector councils, business, and labour. Another three interviews with language providers were also added. As interest in the project was higher than expected, more interviews were conducted than originally planned. In addition to the ACCC Immigration Roundtable and the CIC ELT workshop, the Western Workplace Essential Skills Network (WWESTNET) conference provided an opportunity to discuss the project and seek input from a further 20 people; their names, however, are not included on the interview list. Perspectives were gathered from across Canada, with the exception of New Brunswick, PEI, and Newfoundland and Labrador. The final breakdown of interviews is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Key Informants by Sector

Sector	# of Interviewees	% of Interviewees
Business	7	20%
Labour	4	11%
Sector Councils and Joint Bodies	4	11%
Government	10	29%
Language Providers	6	18%
Other Non-government Organizations	4	11%
Total	**35**	**100%**

(Please see Annex A for a list of people consulted, and Annex B for the interview questions.)

2.5 Sector Council Survey

In the development of the survey of Canada's 28 sector councils, Gary Greenman, Executive Director, The Alliance of Sector Councils, and the ACCC provided valuable input. Twelve councils responded, which represents a response rate of 46% (please see Annex C for the survey).

Nearly all the sector councils who responded indicated a desire for further discussion. A focus group took place on May 5 with three participants (please see Annex D for the questions

discussed at the focus group). A number of other councils were referred to the CCLB to explore opportunities to benchmark various occupations.

2.6 Analysis and Conclusions

The analysis of findings, along with the recommendations to CIC, are based on the needs and challenges of business, labour, and sector councils in delivering and supporting ELT training. Initially, identification of some 10 to 15 employer best practices was expected. However, a lack of employer activity in this area resulted in an insufficient number of distinctive examples. Where there are employers involved in workplace ELT delivery, they tend to be in provinces with provincial government delivery support programs. Instead, five groups of practices from employers, colleges, government, and communities are presented.

3 Scope and Understanding

3.1 The Federal Government and Language Training

In 1992, the federal government introduced Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), and the complementary program, Labour Market Language Training (LMLT). According to Karen Lior, these programs "have all but replaced the previously federally funded as well as many provincially funded ESL programs. Eighty percent of federal language training dollars have been shifted from Employment to Immigration in the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission. Basic Language training is now delivered as part of settlement and not as part of labour market training."[2]

LMLT was terminated, however, following the division of Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission into Human Resources and Development Canada (HRDC) and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). The distinction between employment training and language training was further entrenched with the 1995 changes to the Employment Insurance (EI) Act. CIC was given responsibility for settlement-related activities, while HRDC had responsibility for labour market training. Labour market training, however, restricted access to those who are EI-eligible, which excludes many immigrants. New immigrants were left with the LINC programs, which generally have no labour market focus and which end between CLB levels 3 and 5 as determined on a regional basis. Moreover, immigrants must access such programs within three years of landing.

In the 2003 budget, the federal government allocated $10 million over two years to help its partners deliver more advanced labour market language training. While the new ELT initiative has many features of the LMLT, a new feature is the requirement for a 50% contribution from the delivering partner.[3]

The program is based on the premise that "the average immigrant has a higher education level than the average Canadian born in Canada, but some do not have the language skills in either English or French to be able to use their skills optimally. Increasing the current levels of language training would help realize the human capital gained through immigration."[4] Consequently, ELT targets immigrants at CLB levels 7 to 10, who live in large urban areas (Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal alone receive 75% of all immigrants).

Several provinces have agreements with CIC for direct delivery of language training, while others have co-managed agreements. How provinces support language training varies and is affected by federal regulations. For example, until changes in CIC funding took effect in the late 1990s, Alberta had an extensive English in the workplace program, which has now been reduced to one project in each of the last two years. Activity sponsored solely by employers is limited to the oil and gas industry, where employers will pay to upgrade language skills for their professionals, but face a dearth of practitioners to deliver the training.

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[2] Lior, Karen Charnow. "LINC to What?"
[3] Conversation with Althea Williams, CIC, March 18, 2004
[4] Citizenship and Immigration Canada. "ELT Communiqué December 2003 The Enhanced Language Training Information Update."

In Manitoba, where the provincial government has administered an English in the Workplace program for over 15 years, the key message is that employers are not educators – they are willing to invest, but they need something substantive and effective to invest in. With experience in running bridging programs as well as partnering with Workplace Education Manitoba to deliver a range of workplace specific skills training programs, their programs take place in the workplace and in a pre-employment context. In addition, with part-time programs, their initiative seems to fit the requirements of small and medium sized businesses.

3.2 Eligibility for ELT

Immigrants eligible for ELT include permanent residents, Convention refugees and protected persons, and individuals granted a temporary resident permit to facilitate their early admission to Canada; Canadian citizens are excluded from the ELT program. Like the general public, employers tend to make few distinctions among immigrants, and are unfamiliar with different types of immigrant status and how this affects services and opportunities. Indeed, immigrant status varies widely according to the following classifications:

- Family
- Refugees
- Business Class
- Skilled Workers
- Provincial nominees
- Others (such as live-in caregivers)

In 2002, the number of people arriving in Canada under each category was as follows:

Table 2: 2002 – Immigrants to Canada by Status[5]

Class of Immigrant	#	%
Family	65,227	28%
Refugees	25,111	11%
Business Class	11,041	5%
Skilled Workers	123,357	54%
Provincial Nominees	2,127	1%
Others	2,145	1%
Totals	**229,058**	**100%**

The skilled worker category requires the principal applicant have an occupation or a profession at level 0 (management occupations), level A (requiring post-secondary education), or level B (requiring college education or apprenticeship) of the National Occupational Classification (NOC). While points are awarded for immigrants' past 10 years of experience, there is no guarantee that experience or credentials will be accepted in Canada.

[5] Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts and Figures 2002, Immigration Overview

As the largest immigrant class, Skilled Workers are the primary target of the ELT program; they are also, however, much more likely to arrive with significant English and/or French language skills.

Table 3: 2002 Percentage Speaking neither English nor French by Class[6]

Immigration Class	% speaking neither French nor English
Family (principal applicant and dependents)	54.93%
Refugee (principal applicant and dependents)	50.52%
Business (principal applicant)	56.48%
Skilled Worker (principal applicant)	15.78%

It has become clear that the ELT eligibility requirement of non-citizenship would affect how the initiative is received in the workplace. An 'in-the-workplace' program that distinguishes among workers might have less appeal as one that does not. It also became clear during our research that ELT's requirement of higher CLB levels would not benefit immigrants below CLB level-6 who are already in the workplace.

3.3 Scope of Research

The research was approached from the perspective of business, labour, and sector councils. Consideration of regulatory bodies and professional associations was deliberately excluded for primarily two reasons: first, the project mandate focused on the needs of business, labour, and sector councils; second, a larger body of experience and knowledge already exists concerning the efforts of regulatory bodies. For example, several bridging projects in Ontario, as well as several projects related to Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) focus on these groups.

Nevertheless, the research indicates that the presence of a mediating group, such as a regulatory or immigrant-serving agency, would facilitate business and labour involvement in ELT. The presence of such a group is likely to make the process smoother for employers. Sector councils have the potential to take on this role for non-regulatory occupations.

As the ELT initiative did not include Quebec, the research did not focus on French language training, although the status of language training for immigrants in Quebec was examined as part of the background research.

While a glossary of the terms used throughout the research is included in the report, several important distinctions should be noted at the outset. Within the many types of ESL learners, there are those who are literate in their mother tongue, while others, known as Literacy ESL learners, are not and face different challenges. Other challenges exist for learners whose native language does not use the Roman alphabet. Still others are educated in English, but have accents that can interfere with communication. Where necessary, the report distinguishes among the

[6] Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts and Figures 2002, Immigration Overview

types of ESL learners; however, for ease of reading, the distinctions are not made overtly at all times.

While ELT does favour newcomers and non-citizens, ESL issues in the workplace affect a larger group. Some workers, who have been residents for decades, and who perhaps have become citizens, still have language challenges. Others have managed until workplace language requirements increased as a result of new regulations or work methods, and their language skills were rendered insufficient.

The research consistently attempts to incorporate the perspectives of all workers who might have language issues. In doing so, the discussion of the present state of the ELT is perhaps 'half empty'. ELT might provide assistance for those who have special-purpose English needs such as occupation-specific language; however, for the many semi-skilled and skilled people who are already in a workplace, a more general English in the workplace approach might be more appropriate. The evidence suggests that the nuances of government program divisions and definitions are unhelpful on the shop floor.

4 Background and Analysis

4.1 The Importance of Immigration to Labour Supply

The analysis began by examining the role of immigration in various sectors and occupations in order to gain an understanding of the context for the study. Throughout Canada's history, immigration has been an important, if not critical, component of Canada's labour supply, and results from the latest Census suggest that the last decade of the 20th century has been no exception. Between 1991 and 2001, Canada's labour force grew by 1.4 million, with 70 per cent of this increase attributable to the 978,000 immigrants.[7]

The education profile of new immigrants is consistent with the desire to attract skilled labour from abroad. A large percentage of new immigrants arrive each year with post-secondary education and training. In 2001, 46 per cent (66,013) of new immigrants aged 15 and over held a university degree, and an additional 14 per cent held a non-university diploma or trade certificate.[8] By comparison, the number of undergraduate degrees granted in 1998 by Ontario's 29 universities totalled only 53,664.

According to 2001 Census data, immigrants make up a significant proportion of the Canada's labour force – particularly in manufacturing, as well as professional, scientific, and technical services. Indeed, 27% of the manufacturing labour force is composed of immigrants, and one out of ten is a recent immigrant (having landed within the last 10 years).

Table 4

Industry sector	% immigrant	% recent immigrant
31-33 Manufacturing	27%	10%
55 Management of companies and enterprises	25%	7%
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	25%	9%
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	24%	9%
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	23%	5%
52 Finance and insurance	23%	7%
72 Accommodation and food services	22%	9%
81 Other services (except public administration)	21%	7%
41 Wholesale trade	21%	7%
Total labour force 15 years and over by industry - 1997 North American Industry Classification System	**20%**	**6%**
51 Information and cultural industries	20%	7%
62 Health care and social assistance	19%	5%
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	19%	5%

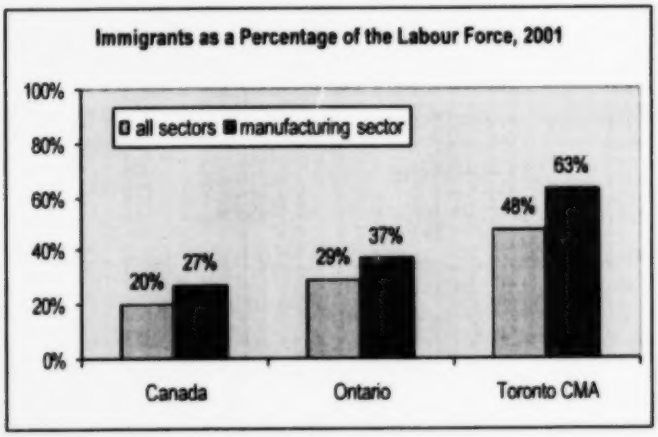
[7] Canada's reliance on immigration for labour force growth is greater than – but not dissimilar to – that of the United States. Between 1990 and 2000, 50% of U.S. labour force growth was due to immigration. See *Immigrant Workers and the Great American Job Machine: The Contributions of New Foreign Immigration to National and Regional Labour Force Growth in the 1990s.* Andrew Sum, Neeta Fogg, Paul Harrington. Northeastern University, Center for Labor Market Studies.

[8] Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Facts and Figures 2001: Immigration Overview.

61 Educational services	17%	4%
44-45 Retail trade	17%	6%
23 Construction	17%	4%
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	14%	4%
22 Utilities	13%	2%
91 Public administration	11%	2%
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	10%	3%
21 Mining and oil and gas extraction	8%	2%

Occupation	% immigrant	% recent immigrant
J Occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities	30%	12%
C Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	27%	11%
A Management occupations	22%	5%
D Health occupations	20%	5%
All occupations	**20%**	**6%**
B Business, finance and administration occupations	19%	5%
G Sales and service occupations	19%	7%
F Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	18%	5%
H Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	17%	5%
E Occupations in social science, education, government service and religion	17%	4%
I Occupations unique to primary industry	10%	3%

Figure 1



In light of the growing concern among business and labour leaders about skill shortages and Canada's historical reliance on immigration for skilled labour, the increasing difficulties that many immigrants face in accessing jobs in line with their qualifications have a direct impact on labour market efficiency and national productivity.

A recent Statistics Canada[9] study on the labour market outcomes of immigrants six months after their arrival in Canada found that less than half (44%) had secured employment. Among those who did, 60% *were employed in an occupational field different from that prior to immigrating*. For example, among immigrants who had found jobs within six months, 39% were employed in natural and applied science occupations prior to immigration, but only 19% were employed in such occupations six months after landing.

4.2 How Business and Labour Leaders Address Skills Shortages

Respondents to the CLBC's *Viewpoints 2002* survey of business and labour leaders were asked to consider the importance of various actions in addressing their organization's skill requirements. The survey included a list of 15 possible actions, for which managers and labour leaders specified each as "not important," "somewhat important" or "very important."

The most prevalent choices for action concerned the existing workforce – as upgrading employee skills, mentoring, retention, and succession planning resonated with all four *Viewpoints* constituencies. At 59% and 70%, private sector managers and labour leaders were most likely to see *upgrading skills of current employees*, as "very important," while *succession planning* was the most common choice for public sector management and labour. There was also broad agreement on actions less important in addressing skill requirements.

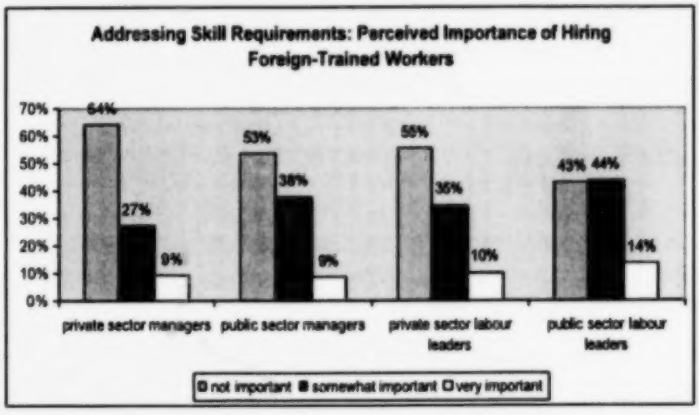
[9] Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Process, Progress, and Prospects. Cat. 89-611-XIE, 2003.

Table 5: Actions to Address Skills Requirements: Percent of Managers and Labour Leaders Saying Selected Action is "Very Important"
CLBC Viewpoints 2002

	Managers		Labour Leaders	
	Private Sector	Public Sector	Private Sector	Public Sector
Upgrading skills of current employees	59	61	70	52
Improving succession planning	50	63	59	61
Specific measures to retain current employees	45	49	44	54
Mentoring of young workers by older workers	45	50	64	58
Hiring young labour market entrants	40	39	50	39
Phased-in retirement policies	14	28	43	48
Changing job descriptions / reallocating work	23	35	18	27
Attracting workers from other organizations	23	35	17	19
Substituting machinery/equipment for labour	15	6	20	8
Contracting out	13	14	22	13
Hiring Aboriginals	9	19	22	20
Hiring foreign-trained workers	**9**	**9**	**10**	**14**
Hiring visible minorities	7	13	20	22
Downsizing	7	9	19	11
Hiring workers with disabilities	5	9	17	13

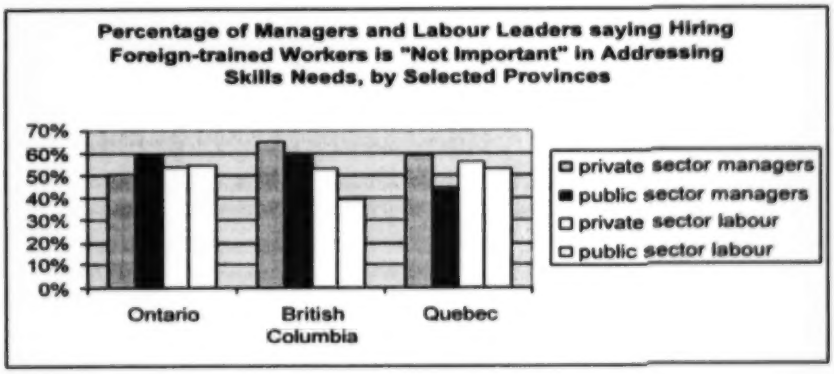
Relatively few managers and labour leaders see hiring foreign-trained workers as "very important" in addressing skill requirements. Indeed, very large proportions consider this action as "not important."

Figure 2



The low emphasis given to hiring of foreign-trained workers is explained, in part, by uneven settlement patterns of new immigrants that limit their availability to employers in some areas. Over half of recent immigrants have settled in Ontario's labour market, and close to 90% reside in three provinces: Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec. Nevertheless, the *Viewpoints 2002* data show that even in these provinces, hiring foreign-trained workers tends to be viewed as "not important" in addressing skills needs. In Ontario, for example, 51% of private sector managers and 59% of public sector managers say hiring foreign-trained workers is not important in addressing their skill requirements, while about 33% said it was somewhat important, and only 10% said it was very important.

Figure 3



The perceived importance of hiring foreign-trained workers does increase – albeit modestly – among firms facing potentially more urgent skill requirements. In Ontario, managers expecting 10% or more of their employees to retire in the next five years were only somewhat more likely than those with fewer expected retirements to consider hiring foreign-trained workers as very important (8% versus 15%). In sum, the *Viewpoints 2002* findings indicate that for the majority of private and public sector leaders, hiring foreign-trained workers is simply not an essential strategic solution to skill requirements.

4.3 Perceived Obstacles to Hiring Foreign-Trained Workers

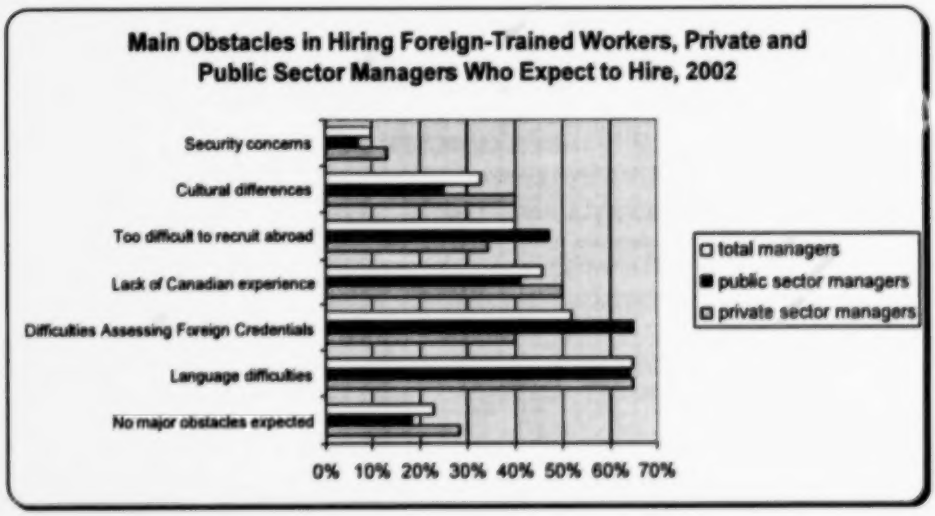
The *Viewpoints 2002* survey also asked private and public sector managers about the main obstacles they face in hiring foreign-trained workers. Respondents were asked to choose up to three potential obstacles from a list of six.

Of managers who expected to hire new employees,[10] only a small proportion – 28% in the private sector, and 18% in the public sector – reported that no major obstacles were expected. *The most commonly cited obstacle was language difficulties*, as 33% of managers who expect to hire new employees named this as the main obstacle to hiring a foreign-trained worker.

[10] 52% of private sector managers and 62% of public sector managers expected to hire new employees (no time frame was specified).

The second and third most commonly reported obstacles were "difficulties assessing foreign credentials" (52%) and "lack of Canadian experience" (46%). Relatively fewer managers saw cultural differences as an obstacle (33%), while "security concerns" was seldom cited (10%).

Figure 4


Main Obstacles in Hiring Foreign-Trained Workers, Private and Public Sector Managers Who Expect to Hire, 2002
Security concerns
Cultural differences
Too difficult to recruit abroad
Lack of Canadian experience
Difficulties Assessing Foreign Credentials
Language difficulties
No major obstacles expected
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%
total managers
public sector managers
private sector managers

The perceived obstacles to hiring foreign-trained workers may explain why so few managers attach strategic importance to foreign-trained workers as a source of skills. *Only 9% of managers said that hiring foreign-trained workers is a "very important action" in addressing their organization's skill requirements.* Indeed, managers more commonly cited "contracting out" and "changing job descriptions" as solutions to the future skill requirements. In the context of a labour market whose growth is increasingly dependent upon immigration, and a business environment in which concern about skill shortages is on the rise, it seems anomalous that foreign-trained workers are not considered a more important skills resource.

Clearly, a key challenge is to find ways of effectively engaging business and labour on immigration issues, and to develop participative approaches that meet the needs of the economy and labour market through more effective integration and utilization of immigrant skills. As *Viewpoints 2002* shows, there is a prevalent and common awareness of the obstacles to hiring of foreign-trained workers, which is an important base upon which to build effective and responsive programs. Based on this analysis, consultation with employers, labour representatives, sector councils, and language providers were conducted to gain a better understanding of these obstacles.

5 Findings

5.1 Business

Repeatedly, the feedback from business was that English language in the workplace was not an issue that was high on its agenda. In cities and provinces with very high immigration levels, English language was recognized as a community issue, but not an employer issue. Organizations such as the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters (CME) reported that their members have not raised ESL as something that the CME should take action on. Only when asked specifically about ESL did companies acknowledge language as an issue in their workplace, and larger companies appeared to be better at handling it than smaller enterprises.

In provinces with a low number of immigrants, such as Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, the issue is not of concern to employers. In Saskatchewan, many immigrants cannot obtain jobs in the face of systemic barriers and obstacles related to race, language, and lack of PLAR. Even when immigrants have been recruited to these smaller provinces, they often leave after a short time.

By contrast, many employers and their associations did raise the issue of mounting skills shortages, which leads to the expectation that employers would look to immigrants to meet these shortages; indeed, this is what the findings indicate. Declining unemployment rates leave only the chronically unemployed in the non-immigrant labour pool – a group that represents a significant training cost – consequently, employers prefer to look overseas for candidates with existing well-honed skills.

Employers did not expect to train these workers; rather, they expect that they will find trained workers who speak English satisfactorily. For skilled workers who require ESL training, employers indicated that they look to immigrant-serving agencies to fulfill this need. In some cases, people from a single language group are recruited, which is thought to alleviate any language problems in the Canadian workplace. Thus, overseas recruiting was seen as a way to deal with a "skills" shortage, rather than a "warm body" shortage – companies we spoke with in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia are all recruiting overseas to fill skills gaps.

Some employers cope with language issues by hiring people from one language group and choosing the most competent English speaker as the lead hand or supervisor. That person in effect becomes a "gatekeeper," who hires others and controls the shop floor, as many of these jobs can be mastered by memorizing routines. Because of their poor English skills, people in these positions tend to be working far below their level of competence.[11]

There is a growing number of businesses that are owned and operated by immigrants or new Canadians, who hire people from their own cultural group and work in their own language. Moreover, many proprietors forego membership in associations such as the CME – preferring to form their own business associations that could work on their behalf to fulfill needs such as language training.

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[11] Anecdotal findings gleaned from participants at the ELT Workshop held January 12, 2004.

Another tactic businesses employ to overcome language issues is to have foreign-trained workers do the basic work, which a Canadian-accredited professional then certifies. This is frequently the case for immigrant engineers who lack a Canadian license, but can perform a variety of tasks; thus, employers incur lower costs and avoid the need to provide training. Occasionally employers provide ESL training to workers with advancement potential.

There is also evidence of a growing trend to use tests to screen out immigrants with poor language skills. Other employers set grade 12 matriculation as the entry requirement, while some feel it is not worth the effort to hire immigrants with inadequate English skills.

Nevertheless, employers did take an interest in several aspects of immigration, such as Foreign Credentials Recognition. The CME's Ontario Division published a report entitled "Right Before your Eyes: internationally trained workers in Canada" in order to raise awareness of this resource among its membership.

Some employers let immigrant-serving agencies take the lead on ESL training and bridging programs for skilled workers. CME-BC is beginning to work with United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society (SUCCESS), an agency serving the Chinese community, on a bridging program focusing on trades. In such cases, employers assist with job placements, but not language training, which reflects employers' general perspective that they lack the expertise to deal with language issues.

Elsewhere, the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board will be collaborating with the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology (SIAST) on a bridging project for foreign-trained tradespersons. In addition, in Manitoba, the CME is working with a private group called Gateway to provide employability skills training, which includes language training.

Companies that work with frameworks such as ISO or Hazardous Access Critical Control Points (HACCP) acknowledge the importance of English language skills, with an emphasis on basic communications and reading. This is also important for companies using the lean manufacturing model, for which workers must comprehend the training material

Some employers do understand that training helps foster positive work environment and that retention of workers who receive regular training tends to be higher. The path from awareness to action, however, is far from a straight line, and it is often a crisis that moves employers to act on language training. One employer called it a "learning moment" – the point at which it all makes sense and it becomes clear that language issues are at the root of a particular workplace problem. Another employer took action when faced with work safety issues that were tied to language. As one informant put it: "the last 8 to 10 minutes of an eight-hour shift is profit, and it is from there that you take your training dollars."

Manitoba has years of experience in developing partnerships to deliver English language and workplace literacy programs. As a result of these efforts, employers there understand that language and literacy skills issues facing new residents cannot be separated from those facing people who have been here longer.

We observed that successful language, essential skills, and/or literacy development in the workplace were carried out in context. Indeed, the more effective programs embed these skills into workplace training such as WHMIS, or workplace health and safety. Interventions that work include:

- Job requirements that are matched with language demands;
- Pre- and post-employment orientation sessions;
- Cross-cultural sensitivity programs for supervisors and managers;
- Buddy systems to help new workers integrate;
- Mentoring programs that are part of (not in addition to) the mentor's position;
- In-house trainers and materials to foster a real sense of the workplace context.

Language issues often manifest themselves in other forms. For example, ESL workers who regularly need clarification might mistakenly be perceived by their supervisor as lacking competence. Supervisors often need support in reinforcing the learning and techniques of their ESL workers. Such challenges are also amplified by the diversity within the immigrant population, and the differences in how well individuals integrate, learn the language, and overcome culture shock, which depend on personal attributes and community supports.

The cost of setting up a program – infrastructure, program management, proposal and partnership development – is far too high for a business association to assume on its own. Infrastructure, partnership development, and fundraising alone are estimated to be between $25,000 and $40,000. Clearly, the developmental costs are a barrier and must be made available before considering a program. Employers tend to be risk-averse, which makes an upfront corporate investment unlikely in lieu of additional incentives.

Various stakeholders indicated that to raise the priority of this issue on the business agenda, the English language issue must be tied to skills shortages. Indeed, in BC, the CME just launched a task force on skills shortages that could identify ESL issues. Nevertheless, it is clear that employers are reluctant to take on this issue without a partnership with immigrant-serving agencies.

Stakeholders from Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan cautioned that immigration cannot be portrayed as the only solution to the skills shortages issue. Indeed, some might consider it a higher priority to tap into the large aboriginal population in these provinces by providing the necessary training to bring skills among that group to a level sufficient to address shortages faced by industry. Any immigrant ESL strategy risks being pushed off the public agenda by the more pressing challenges of aboriginal peoples.

CME's consortia concept, which are groups of 15 or so companies that meet monthly to discuss profitability, might prove an effective mechanism to engage employers – especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs) – in the ESL issue. Active in Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and Newfoundland and Labrador, consortia address topics that are likely common to all manufacturers and could form the basis of joint language training initiatives – topics such as health and safety, work ethics, lean manufacturing, how to work in the Canadian environment.

The most consistent finding was that any program must make employer participation easy. Employers are not expecting any need for them to provide language or essential skills training. There needs to be access to teachers, to specialists, and to money. The program must be very practical and clear, and straightforward – in the words of one employer: "you shouldn't have to turn yourself into a pretzel to qualify."

Employers, especially SMEs, are unlikely to act on their own, which will necessitate a public awareness program. As the business community is generally not attuned to language issues, employers need help to get involved because they tend to be unaware of what to do or how to do it. Employers might respond positively to an ESL program if a consultant or an immigrant group approached them to form a partnership. Still, they will need help to identify the problem and whom to call, although they would likely contact their association (CME, Chamber of Commerce, etc). Some employers might contact their local community colleges but likely not their local university. Approaches need to reflect business objectives – in the words of one employer: "Something run for and by business would have better credibility."

5.2 Labour

Labour representatives were consulted first about how they generally deal with immigration issues, and then more specifically about language. The labour movement approaches immigration issues from several standpoints. There is a long-standing concern that employers use immigration to displace Canadian workers or import workers instead of training Canadians. This concern is balanced by the equally compelling argument that an obligation exists to train immigrants, including ESL, either prior to or during employment.

Efforts have also been made to recruit immigrants to the labour movement. The 2002 Canadian Labour Congress' Workers of Colour conference drew attention to issues facing immigrants and generated strong support for labour to work on the FCR issue. In British Columbia, the Federation of Labour is introducing youth groups from different immigrant communities to the labour movement.

Still, challenges arise in introducing the labour movement to immigrants. Depending on their background, they may have had little exposure to unions, or exposure to unions unlike those in Canada. In addition, the seniority system creates a perception that unions oppose new labour force entrants, although many activists are working to create an inclusive labour movement.

The BC Federation of Labour also promotes a more inclusive approach for non-English speakers. Using the resources of its workplace literacy project, it encourages affiliates to use clear language in communicating with members. Under its anti-racism/discrimination campaigns, efforts are made to reach immigrant members and to create safer workplaces.

Labour has raised concerns about work placements, particularly with youth co-ops, but more generally with immigrant placements to provide Canadian experience. Again, the position is that placements should not take away jobs from existing workers, and that the work should be

meaningful. To make these placements function well, however, takes time and a great deal of support for which employers are usually not compensated.

Language issues have been low on labour's political agenda, even in regions with large immigrant populations. Among union training efforts, however, are a number of ESL and literacy programs that take a holistic approach in which language, literacy, and personal empowerment are addressed through a learner-centred approach. The philosophy that underpins labour efforts to improve the skills of its members is that English language skills are about access to the labour market and full participation in society. UNITE (Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees) incorporated this approach at the learning centre it operated in Winnipeg in the late 1990's and early 2000's, where members from a variety of backgrounds came to improve their English, computer, and literacy skills.

In many provinces, there is little support for workplace-based training and LINC resources are scarce. In BC, while health care workers have benefited from joint labour-management programs to improve their skills, these activities ended with changes in government funding. In Ontario, organizations that provide Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs, such as labour training centres, are not permitted to offer ESL, while Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSDC) in Ontario has until recently, not approved funding for literacy and ESL training for the unemployed.

Labour representatives indicated that many immigrants have not benefited from language training because they are excluded from current federal programs. Immigrants frequently move directly into jobs requiring little or only basic English, and in larger cities, they live and socialize almost wholly in their own language. For areas such as workplace health and safety, however, language skills are an issue; as these workers are ineligible for LINC, the union often steps in.

For example, United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) Local 247 represents supermarket workers who, while not well paid, do receive benefits for working as few as one day a week. The UFCW training centre is designing a program for underemployed workers who lack the skills necessary to move into other jobs. Its challenge is to construct a program that is accessible to workers with transportation/childcare concerns, and/or second (and third) jobs. Notwithstanding these challenges, the existence of the program earns trust among the workers who take the course, and generates cohesiveness among the learners.

Toronto's Labour Education Centre (LEC) is mounting a program with the hospitality sector, where workers often have extensive ESL needs. There is, however, no funding available for ESL. Ontario's education cutbacks mean that the Toronto District School Board is no longer in a position to supply instructors for occupation-specific ESL training. While LEC could hire its own instructors at about $30 an hour, funding limitations prevent this.

Another key message is in the great difficulty working people have accessing programs. In addition to funding, transportation, and childcare issues, learning a second language takes much longer than many programs permit. Both UFCW 247 and LEC spoke of the challenges facing the underemployed who are often ineligible for LINC, lack the financial resources to take training privately, and whose job status makes employer support highly unlikely.

UFCW 247 uses a return-to-learn approach with all its programs, which accommodates these workers who are often in precarious situations and have had negative learning experiences. This approach assists people with conflict resolution, negotiating with families to allow time for homework and learning, test taking strategies, and other learning skills. LEC is also working to create a comprehensive return-to-learn program in partnership with local colleges.

Overall, the findings highlight concerns about the growing numbers of underemployed who face the frustration of resolving significant language issues. Labour training officials indicated that they would welcome more political focus on immigration and language issues. In addition, the issues facing the employed and unemployed were given equal importance to those facing immigrants.

5.3 Sector Councils

Twelve sector councils responded to the electronic survey – a return of 46%. Asked about their familiarity with the Canadian Language Benchmarks, only one reported that it was very familiar with the benchmarks, 75% were somewhat familiar, and 16% had not heard of them. An outline of where the councils' language requirements fall within the benchmarks is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

	Reading and Writing			Oral Communications		
	Basic	Intermed.	Advanced	Basic	Intermed.	Advanced
Unskilled	77%	23%	0	44%	55%	0
Skilled	0	63%	37%	10%	54%	36%
Professional/Trade	0	8%	92%	0	8%	92%

The language requirements for skilled workers derived from the sector councils are very similar to those targeted by the ELT program. That is, ELT is intended to provide skilled workers with 'intermediate' language skills.

With respect to language tests administered by regulatory bodies to determine eligibility to work, only four councils indicated use of such tests. One used a provincial government exam, another did the certification themselves, while a third indicated that evidence of language must be provided although the process is not standardized

Only two respondents indicated that they had developed language programs; many operate on slim margins and lack the resources to train. One council integrated language components into all of its training rather than providing a standalone program. Another has a project to develop solutions to license professionals for work more quickly and efficiently. Four councils indicated that they are aware of companies that supported workplace language training.

The level of importance to overall human resources strategies that councils placed on language issues is outlined in Table 7.

Table 7

Level of Importance	Percent Responding
Very Important	67%
Somewhat Important	25%
Not at All Important	8%

Respondents reported that many entry-level new-hires are new Canadians with weak literacy skills. Even for professional categories, employers find that high technical skills do not always correspond to high communications skills or language fluency, which prevents many foreign-trained professionals from entering the workforce. Recruiting immigrants was seen to entail not just language issues, but also ensuring an understanding of Canadian work culture. Several councils noted the importance of a thorough understanding of workplace health and safety regulations and practices – particularly, understanding the information and the ability to explain it to others. Nine councils indicated that occupation- or industry-specific language programs would be helpful, while one said it depends on the nature of the curriculum and the target occupation.

At the January 12th ELT workshop, several participants recommended that employers use the CLB's as a standard part of job descriptions to avoid subjective judgements of applicants' language capacity. Over 84% of the councils were willing to examine this concept (their contact details will be provided to the Canadian Centre for Language Benchmarks). Six councils indicated that employers in their sector might agree to deliver workplace language training – although only five thought a 50% cost contribution would be acceptable.

Three sector council representatives also participated in a two-hour focus group. The findings largely echoed the results of the survey; specifically, participants identified language as a labour market issue, of which immigrants are a sub-component.

While participants noted that they are exploring how they might coordinate with immigrant-serving agencies and language training providers, they also expressed concerns about the stability of these organizations, which often suffer from high staff turnover. A further concern was the perception that few agencies provide advanced language training. In sum, a need was expressed for national standards for delivery agencies. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that sector councils will provide language training directly.

A contextual concern was raised with respect to occupational regulation, which can vary extensively from region to region – not necessarily for an occupation as a whole, but for specific components of the job. One interesting example of linking language to occupational requirements comes from Quebec. The *Conseil québécois des ressources humaines en tourisme* (CQRHT), in conjunction with the *Service d'évaluation linguistique de l'Université du Québec*, developed a proficiency scale defining second-language language proficiency requirements for some 50 occupations within the tourism sector. The scale defines standards for both written and oral French, and is based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks. This resource is openly available to employers, employees, students, academic organizations, and other individuals.

Neither large nor small employers are likely to become involved in developing or delivering custom training, unless the program is "super easy" or the sector faces significant skills/labour shortages.

With a better knowledge of what is going on across federal government departments, sector councils' main role is to provide communications and coordination.

In April 2003, Gary Greenman, Executive Director of The Alliance of Sector Councils, made a presentation to the Standing Committee on Human Resource Development on literacy in the workplace, in which he outlined several items that would help councils deal with literacy matters – many of which would also apply to language issues.

- An ability to determine what literacy and learning approaches work best for the new economy and for a particular industry
- User-friendly tools for employers to determine literacy and learning needs, along with upgrading programs that complement the workplace, the sector, and employees
- A long term, sustainable national commitment to program and funding support to enable sector councils and others to design and implement more national and sectoral programs, including assessment of effectiveness and results.[12]

Sector councils represent an excellent means to a coordinated approach for providing ELT. Some are already involved in the direct delivery of programs, while others have experience in mounting internship programs to bring more young people into their sectors. Still others have extensive systems of benchmarks and occupation-specific training competencies that might easily accommodate language benchmarks. Nevertheless, language and training issues are but two among a large number of human resource concerns sector councils face. Developing a consensus on the need to tackle language issues will take time, financial support, and content expertise to develop the actual programs. While only limited results are possible in the immediate term, a plan that targets a few sectors each year could meet with some success.

5.4 Language Training Providers

Language providers included representatives from community colleges, community-based language training providers, and English in the workplace practitioners. Most informants had direct experience in providing language training in a pre-employment or workplace context.

Providers reported various challenges in meeting ESL speakers' needs. LINC programming is inadequately coordinated for a smooth transition to academically oriented English classes, and students are limited with respect to the allowed hours of paid work and the amount of LINC training. For example, the Calgary LINC program goes to level 4 and has a limit of 1000 hours, whereas it takes learners about 500 hours to advance one level. On the other hand, the Ontario LINC program has no limit on hours and goes to level 5. Immigrants are typically also ineligible for student financial aid during their first year in Canada.

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[12] Gary Greenman, "Speaking Notes for Presentation to the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities – Roundtable on Workplace Literacy Issues." April 8, 2004

Classroom success does not always translate into workplace success. It was suggested that achieving the appropriate benchmark level may not reflect public tolerance for any remaining language deficiencies for positions such as call centre or customer service rep. In addition to the complexity of language acquisition and skills development, immigrants also face barriers in foreign credentials assessment and gaining advanced standing. In other cases, the use of the benchmark levels to track progress might not reflect reality – some learners remained at the same benchmark level despite passing their courses and finding employment.

Among other inconsistencies, many immigrants are caught in a catch-22, as language training often takes longer than the length of time they can be unemployed before becoming ineligible to work in their occupation in Canada; and the required intensive language training is often full-time and costly. On the other hand, some professions grant certification without language requirements, which does little, if anything, to enhance an immigrant's employability.

Many colleges are working to respond to immigrants' language needs while integrating an awareness of these needs into their regular programming. The traditional approach was to remediate for language and then enter the immigrant in the technical program – a model now being challenged. For example, healthcare programs are being asked to ensure that language components are available alongside Canadian workplace instruction to benefit both native and second language speakers. A Manitoba college project identified language benchmarks required for many courses,[13] while Ottawa's Algonquin College has a language course for people pursuing the taxi-training program.

Colleges have yet to involve employers in language programs in the same way as they have in college technical programs – a gap identified at the ACCC Immigration Roundtable and targeted as an opportunity to reach into the employer community for discourse about language level requirements for various occupations. Such efforts will help bridge the gap between success in college language programs and success in the workplace. An Ontario pilot project – Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment – will be an excellent resource for this.

One exception to the lack of employer involvement comes in the area of bridging programs, where many colleges work with regulatory bodies and, through such partnerships, have established relationships with employers specifically to address the needs of foreign-trained workers. Work has already been done in the nursing profession, which has benchmarked entry-level requirements and developed a nursing-specific language test.

These bridging programs can be expensive to administer; for example, one college has three full time employees to find placements, mentor students during placements, find jobs, and support students who fail to find employment. This program had a quarterly intake of 34 students, and an estimated budget of $5,000 per student.

Few colleges actively provide English in the workplace programs, in part because that have no funding to do so, and where funding is available, potential clients often see them as expensive. The cost of developing a program, identifying companies, building partnerships, negotiating a

[13] Manitoba. "Canadian Language Benchmarks: A summary of courses, programs, occupations and tests that have been benchmarked in Manitoba." September 2003.

program, and delivering training is considered prohibitive. Another obstacle is the challenge of mounting a program with multiple language levels in a single class, which, though often necessary, is difficult to manage. When funding requires a minimum number of students, sound pedagogy is sacrificed for larger classes. Workplace classes often run during lunch breaks or at either end of the shift – such odd hours makes finding instructors difficult.

The non-college sector also has little activity with relatively few private trainers who seem to be concentrated in Manitoba and Nova Scotia, where financial support for workplace ESL programs is available. While the Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC) once had a vibrant English in the workplace program with about 25 companies and a full-time manager, the withdrawal of federal funds has resulted in downsizing. Without a full time manager to market the program, activity has dropped to eight companies with one or two employees being tutored. To compensate, HILC developed its English for Work program, which was originally intended to run occupation- or sector-specific programming, but lacking sufficient learners, the program has become more generic. In addition, as past funding for workplace programs was limited to ESL, other, perhaps more important issues such as work culture, discrimination, and access to training could not be addressed.

One innovative private language provider has developed an assessment tool for new hires, which is intended not to screen out applicants, but rather to assess proficiency in English and document use, and then to develop a plan to remediate any weakness. This provides employers with new hires who can "hit the ground running."

Training providers echoed the business community in their view that employers should not be educators. Employers were perceived as all too often using tests to screen applicants on language skills. On the other hand, using sector councils to deliver training or to partner with colleges was seen as a viable means to overcome the challenges faced by employers and colleges.

Several practitioners indicated that what employers tend to identify as a language issue is actually a pronunciation or accent reduction issue. While this is a particular issue for professional workers, as highly-valued employees, they often receive employer-paid training (often in a one-to-one setting).

One of several emerging issues is a growing concern about the skills of immigrant children and adolescents, who have been educated in a Canadian high school, but whose language skills are below college entrance requirements; interestingly, they perceive themselves to be without language problems. Another issue involves immigrants who are educated and trained in English, and also consider themselves to be without language problems, but whose communication skills employers often find inadequate. A possible approach here might be to present programs that target foreign professionals as something other than ESL.

Repeatedly, practitioners indicated that language proficiency cannot be separated from other workplace issues, such as ethnic diversity, harassment, and gender diversity. Informants cited as good practice the presentation of language training presented in the context of WHMIS, Human Rights legislation, Health and Safety, or workers' rights, so that the language element is

integrated seamlessly. Practitioners spoke of the need to undertake organizational needs assessments to understand the true nature of the workplace, and the need to develop custom curricula. The earlier "English in the Workplace Program" of the Ontario government is an example of a language program that became part of good workplace literacy practice.

While good practices do exist, practitioners expressed concerns about the difficulties of working under the auspices of government programs, as a number have been cancelled despite their effectiveness. A certain level of frustration was also expressed in terms of overall workplace needs as Canada is apparently the only English-speaking country that separates language from literacy, and only provides support to newcomers.

Various tools exist to help employers and language providers create a smooth path for immigrants to integrate into the labour force. While the value of the Canadian Language Benchmarks was expressed repeatedly, they have typically been used to measure individual proficiency rather than to define specific job requirements (as can be done). Tools such as the Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) can be adapted to help employers measure the skills of workers against the actual job requirements, and the CCLB is working with TOWES to create a complete package by linking essential skills to language skills.

A wealth of occupation-specific curricula have already been developed, much of which is, however, sitting unused in colleges and community-based organizations. This is partly because, prior to use, this material requires professional development for the instructor.

Considered one of the most valuable tools available, Teachers of English as a Second Language (TESL) provides professional development and certification for language instructors, which makes it a perfect vehicle to train practitioners on workplace issues.

Several practitioners raised concerns about immigration status, rather than language needs, being the primary decision criterion. Work-placements were criticized, benefiting newcomers only, while leaving existing workers' ESL needs unaddressed. While today the skilled worker is dominant category of immigrant, not so long ago many immigrants landed with lower skill levels, are still in the labour force, and need support. Other immigrants, having taken positions outside their field for economic reasons, were unable to participate in programs such as LINC, and are no longer eligible. Still others became Canadian citizens, and consequently lost their eligibility for federal government language programs.

In addition to curriculum and professional development, delivering effective language training requires infrastructure capacity to facilitate organizational needs assessments, partnership development, mentorship training, and simplifying employer involvement. While most informants were pleased that attention is being paid to the gap in higher levels of language training, their enthusiasm was qualified by concerns about the lack of infrastructure support, the difficulty in managing a workplace program, and the exclusion of lower level language training in the workplace.

6 Some promising practices

6.1 Endurapak

Endurapak is a Winnipeg based company, which has an English language program running in its workplace. Manitoba Labour and Immigration sponsors the program. The Communication Energy and Paperworkers union (CEP) represents the workers. As the company's web site describes the business:

> We have been in continuous production of industrial bags at our present location since 1906. Over the years, we have improved and modernized our facility to keep pace with technological advances.
>
> In 1973, we introduced an innovative package to North America - the Flexible Intermediate Bulk Container (FIBC). This product has increased in acceptance to the point that it has become our primary thrust in the market place. Twenty years later, in 1993, we introduced another innovation - square FIBCs. We will continue to develop and introduce new designs to fulfill our customers' needs and our ISO 9000 certificate will ensure your quality needs are fulfilled.

Endurapak is a needle trade industry and they need sewing machine operators. There have been some limitations in the availability of operators despite having so many jobs in the needle trade moving offshore. As a result, Endurapak has had to train their own workers. It is a diverse workforce and many of the new hires are referrals from family and friends, a practice that is seen as an advantage to the company.

Lately, there has been a change in the composition of the work force. Several conversations took place between the company, CEP, and the government about the changes. Endurapak had been a workplace primarily made up of one ethnic group. With the change in demographics, there are different languages, which have created barriers. Management and union began to observe divisions within the workplace – people sitting together by ethnic group for their breaks and some misunderstandings among workers.

The goal was to improve communication between management and the employees and to build a harmonious workplace. Helping people communicate better inside the workplace will help the workers with their lives outside the workplace as well. A program was designed with the assistance of Manitoba Labour and Immigration. The company hired a workplace educator with the advice of the department. The program has targeted those most in need. The educator has access to the shop floor, which enables her to speak with the workers directly and with their supervisors. This has helped to integrate the communications program into the company's work culture.

The program is based on the requirements of the workplace but with an eye to applications beyond the workplace. The time for the program is shared – the company provides paid time for half of the course while the other half is done on the employee's time. The program is so successful that they are planning another course.

The company has not analyzed the benefits of the program from a specific cost benefit point of view. In terms of quantifying the costs, the company would prefer to have some hard data, but the bottom line for them is that the amount of communication, the level of proficiency, and the level of confidence have all increased. These indicators have proven to be sufficient to continue to make the case for the program. Initially there were some concerns about poaching or people leaving if their skills increased. However, the company has not experienced this. Rather they are finding that the more that people understand about what is going on around them, they see the company as a place they would like to stay. Since the wages are comparable with others in the industry, the low turnover rate can be attributed to a series of factors that see people staying, including improved communications.

For Endurapak the lesson learned is that when dealing with improving language levels and culture awareness, you have nothing to lose.

6.2 Alberta Food Processors Association

The Alberta Food Processors Association (AFPA) is an industry association that represents all food and beverage industry sectors: growers, processors, retailers, foodservice buyers, and service providers. In 1998, AFPA embarked on implementing an initiative to create a strategic and coordinated approach to Human Resources. One of its first activities was an environmental scan of the industry that brought to the forefront the issues of essential skills and language.

A growing industry awareness of food safety issues had arisen from increased regulation. Regimes such as Hazardous Access Critical Control Points (HACCP) and ISO were now guiding how the industry was organized. In the aftermath of September 11th, however, the industry was subject to additional regulations under the US Homeland Security Act. This changing operating environment brought to the fore the need to ensure that workers had the skills necessary to accommodate the exigencies of the regulations.

The traditional industry practice was to hire workers and supervisors from a single language group, which became the language of the workplace in which even training was delivered. The AFPA chose to tackle the essential skills and language issue indirectly by weaving a health and safety "script" that integrated essential skills and ESL. The rationale was that essential skills and language training are the foundation for all other technical skills.

AFPA partnered with existing organizations such as the Alberta Workforce Essential Skills (AWES) network, to produce products that include "Essential Skills and HACCP," "Frontline HACCP," and "Frontline HACCP Train-the-Trainer." A sector wide study, published as "Adding Skills, Adding Value: the Essential Skills Needs Assessment for Alberta's Food Processing Industry," determined the industry's language and essential skills needs, and formed the basis of another project to document the methodology for a sector-wide needs assessment – a process taught to workplace practitioners across the country.

AFPA addressed language issues by partnering with NorQuest College to develop a Workplace Trainer and Coach/Consultancy Service, through which a professional language training consultant is available to AFPA members. Companies benefit from in-house training, language

training, and plain language revision of training/company documents. The project also enabled the AFPA to focus on non-immigrants with language and literacy needs.

In 2002, the AFPA's work to link safety and skills culminated in the formation of a $3 million training fund by Alberta Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development. With overwhelming industry buy-in, the AFPA was able to ensure employer access to training dollars – including essential skills and language training. In addition to 50% of the project cost, the Skills Development Initiative provides firms with advice on achieving their human resource development plans, and co-ordinates or develops standardized training programs such as short, targeted workshops to address common areas of need.

Yet, even with funding support, employers encounter difficulties in moving forward, so the AFPA facilitates by providing a proposal template and a list of training contractors. Still, smaller firms often lack expertise to take advantage of the fund, while larger firms can have higher training priorities than language.

Instead of attempting a Return on Investment (ROI) model for justification, the AFPA used other indicators with which plant managers are familiar: safety, record keeping, and market penetration in the USA and Europe. While relating everything back to industry needs has been the hallmark of the initiative, the Skills Development Initiative will undergo a formal evaluation shortly, and this more tangible evidence is expected to confirm the business case.

The AFPA benefited greatly from the experience and support of existing practitioners in the area, without which progress would have depended on trial and error or essential skills and language might have been excluded from its HR strategy. Another critical element of the AFPA's approach is its dedicated human resources development position, the Vice-President Training and Development, who focuses her energy on developing partnerships and supporting firms. As an objective third party, she brings the parties to the table, and as an insider, she has employers' trust, which practitioners or government officials alone do not.

6.3 The Manitoba Government Model

The government of Manitoba has been providing language training in the workplace for about 15 years. They operate from the point of view that businesses are not educators and so need assistance with developing programs. The Adult Language Training (ALT) Branch operates several types of programs, distinguished by their part-time nature. Red River Community College provides full time language programs.

ALT Branch workplace programs, called English at Work, assist the employer in determining needs, work with the employer to hire a practitioner, provide financial support to the program, and offer ongoing advice throughout the life of the program. "20 to 30 English at Work programs are taught annually by independent contract instructors for an average of 300-400 workers."[14]

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[14] Dale Klassen and Lynn Campbell. "Integrated Language and Communication for the Workplace: The Manitoba Model – 2002." The Bottom Line. No. 16 November 2002: 3+.

When working in a workplace, courses cover the entire gamut of workplace needs related to language. . The programs are offered at all CLB levels for immigrant workers, whether "landed" or with Canadian citizenship. Cross-cultural training for supervisors is also available to complement language courses. Expenses are primarily instructor wages which range from $25-30$/hour. Most courses run part-time for 8-10 months a year, but some companies have chosen to take on a half time teacher at a cost of about $20,000 annually. Teachers are paid for one hour teaching to one-hour preparation time as a rule, but the preparation time could increase if there is a requirement for curriculum development. The teacher is a member of the company's workforce and as such is not seen as an 'outsider'. The teacher can also assist on communications issues on the shop floor, in other training courses, and even provide quick one-to-one English lessons at the employee's workstation.

A second type of program is similar to a bridging program. In these, the ALT Branch supports people who are trained in an occupation or who want to get into an occupation with occupation specific language programs. In some cases, these programs are run in conjunction with a regulatory body, but in one case, the learners themselves organized the program.

A challenge to these types of programs comes from the lack of critical mass to carry out a program. Several years ago, there was an urgent need for midwives to be certified in the province. The numbers enabled the ALT Branch to mount an occupation specific language program. However, without significant numbers it is not cost effective to have such a specific programs.

The lack of critical mass and the large number of small businesses in Manitoba resulted in many requests to the English at Work program for tutorials. An alternative to this costly practice was a new program that the ALT Branch developed with Employment Projects of Winnipeg called The Skills Program. The featured courses now include pronunciation and accent refinement, listening to rapid Canadian English, and writing skills – all aimed at assisting immigrants entering businesses and professions. (Plain language writing, a return to learn course, and navigating documents have not yet been delivered, but are available upon request from a business.) Employers can purchase seats in an existing course or individuals can attend in a government subsidized seat. In the former case, a home-work program is developed with the employer and employee to ensure that workplace content is included. An entire class can be purchased by a company as an alternative to them running an on-site English at Work program. The Skills Program is one that works well for small and medium enterprises who are often unable to offer workplace programs, and also provides a good venue for Workers Compensation and disabilities groups to refer clients to. Classes are small, usually 10-15 in a class.

Employers are not just providing language training. There have been several projects where employers have used the CLB to benchmark their positions. This, in one sense, creates the difficulty for new workers of having to reach a specific language level before attaining employment. However, present practice at many companies excludes applicants from ever getting beyond the first stage of application based on brief conversations with a receptionist or difficulties with filling in job application forms – benchmarking is at least more accurate.

Two full-time fieldworkers based in Winnipeg support the English at Work program for the Provincial government. In addition, regional ESL coordinators are equipped to give language support to immigrants, and their employers, in the entire province. In the smaller centres, one-on-one workplace language tutorials are common, although there have been cases where larger employers have been funded to host a program and make it available to workers and their family members in the region.

English at Work practitioners generally work part time. The government supports two professional development activities a year. There are also professional development activities through TESL Manitoba and TEAM, but not always with a workplace focus.

The English at Work program has benefited from having the language assessment centre located in its office. This has led to early identification of some learners and brings coherence to delivery.

English at Work has created a number of curricula. What is a challenge however is making sure the curriculum is used and disseminated. It is a long process to obtain copyright permission to use print and oral materials. The cost of reproducing the curriculum is high, as you often need to reproduce cassettes and videos, not just print material. Some of the Manitoba curricula include:

- Workplace Communications and AutoCAD for Engineers
- Themes and Activities for Effective Communication: A resource for teaching advanced ESL learners
- ESL for Health Professionals: A resource for integrating medical terminology with language skill development
- Midwifery: language and communications for the midwifery upgrading programme
- The ESL Health Care Resources: a resource for integrating health care content with second language skill development
- ESL for childminders: interact with children through play and use academic communication skills
- Taxi Driver ESL Training: a resource for integrating taxi drive training information with language skill development
- Manitoba Labour Legislation: a resource for integrating Manitoba labour legislation information and language skill development

While this is a successful model there are some challenges facing Manitoba. There is little funding for outreach and promotion activities, as the priority is on delivery. There is also no dedicated training allowance fund for language training – unemployed or pre-employed learners must try to access funding from other sources such as Employment Insurance, Social Assistance, or the Refugee Assistance Program.

While the province provides financial support to the company with the hope that the company will eventually take over the program, English at Work coordinators have found that companies rarely agree to fund programs on their own. This demonstrates the necessity

of providing optimal levels of support to businesses to allow immigrants to access language training that is timely and relevant. Without this, new Canadians become "old" in their jobs without ever learning English. Manitoba has taken this as a challenge to an effective and dynamic workforce as well as a health and safety in the workplace issue and dedicated staff time and training funds toward workable solutions. As such, the Manitoba model is one to be recommended.

6.4 Community Colleges

Community colleges are a critical link in the workplace language training chain. While the interview findings from community colleges are reported in section 5.4, the pervasiveness of the college system and the promising efforts presently underway to tackle immigration issues warrants closer attention. This section draws on the findings of the ACCC survey on the capacity of colleges to serve immigrants.[15]

Over 50% of community colleges offer programs for either English or French as a second language, and another 17 institutions provide LINC or the English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) in BC.

Most colleges are involved in bridging programs for immigrants. ACCC found that Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec had the most activity in this area. Manitoba's Red River College took a different approach by integrating immigrants into its existing technical programs and providing support for settlement and language needs.

Workplace involvement for most colleges is in the form of placement programs, with minimal contract training for language skills.

Most colleges find it necessary to provide support to bridge the gap between the end of LINC programming and the requirements of academic English programs. A further gap exists outside of language training as, beyond LINC, learners receive no support for childcare, further training, or transportation.

The ACCC's immigration roundtable, held in March 2004, is an important first step towards building a cohesive national strategy, the necessity of which is highlighted by the lack of an effective mechanism to coordinate the activities of some provincial school boards that are involved in language training. ACCC is a reliable and efficient vehicle for business, labour, and sector councils to discuss language issues and relate to local concerns. ACCC roundtable members have expressed a desire for business to be more fully engaged in the language skills development area of their work. Any future strategy to engage the private sector should include ACCC.

6.5 Community Models: Halifax and Toronto

[15] Association of Canadian Community Colleges. "Responding to the Needs of Immigrants: Diagnostic Background Report," March 2004.

Two local level models need to be highlighted and considered as part of a promising approach to involving the private sector in language training.

With funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Education, the Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC) offers a workplace English program targeting the needs of ESL employees.[16] An instructor assesses the language needs with employees and employers, develops training plans, and delivers custom training to employees in the workplace. The English for Work and Business Program, aimed at people outside the workplace, complements the workplace program. Several programs have been held for specific sectors: business, health care, clerical, entrepreneurs, and hotel workers.

HILC's partnership with the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA),[17] in which even office space is shared, has contributed to a coordinated plan for settlement and language training. For example, MISA's New Beginnings Program provides workplace placements that complement the English at Work Program.

In Toronto, a second promising practice takes the form of the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), which was created as a multi-stakeholder council to improve employment opportunities for immigrants.[18] A critical element of TRIEC is the active participation of private and public sector employers, organized labour, and occupational regulatory bodies, among others.

TRIEC recently issued a call for a study called "Employer Promising Practices" to develop employers' capacity to recognize the value of immigrants' skills, and to facilitate their integration into the workplace. This will be done with a case study approach that documents existing promising employer practices, which will generate guiding principles and a tool kit for employers.[19]

This approach holds promise for other cities, and a leaders council is an effective means to engage business and labour – especially when undertaken in conjunction with a community-wide initiative such as Ottawa's United Way/Canadian Labour and Business Centre model[20]. By bringing all the parties to the table and involving business and labour from the outset, these models have demonstrated value not just to immigrant-serving agencies, but also to the labour market and the community.

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[16] Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre. "English in the Workplace." http://www.hilc.ns.ca/LangTraining/englishworkplace.htm.

[17] Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association. "The New Beginnings Program." http://www.misa.ns.ca/Employment/new_beginnings.htm. "The New Beginnings Program." http://www.integration-net.cic.gc.ca/inet/english/region/atl/2004-01.htm

[18] Canadian Labour and Business Centre "Interim Report for the Integration of Internationally-Trained Workers Project." October 2003. http://www.clbc.ca/Research_and_Reports/Archive/report10230301.asp.

[19] Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council. "Request for Proposals, Employer Promising Practices," Revised March 11, 2003. http://www.triec.ca/Employer_Promising_Practices_RFP.pdf.

[20] Canadian Labour and Business Centre. "Draft Report: Moving Forward: A Strategy for the Integration of Internationally Trained Workers in Ottawa." February 2004 http://www.clbc.ca/Research_and_Reports/Archive/report02130401.asp.

7 Conclusions

At the outset, three objectives were proposed for this project and the conclusions derived for each are presented here.

7.1 Needs, Barriers, and Challenges Involved in Delivery of ELT

Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Enhanced Language Training initiative is presented, as an opportunity to address issues in both occupation-specific and job-specific language needs. CIC also seeks to engage employers and sector councils in cost-sharing partnerships to deliver enhanced language training.

The premise of the research was a determination of the needs, barriers, and challenges to achieving this objective. In partnership with regulatory agencies and language providers, several initiatives saw employers providing work placements and even permanent jobs; the primary research interest, however, was an examination of the extent to which employers could mount their own language training programs.

The investigation revealed that it would be very difficult for individual employers to access the ELT initiative without assistance. There may be potential, however, for sector councils to become involved, perhaps in a manner similar to the model used in regulated professions.

Needs:

Informants spoke of a wide range of needs for the workplace, the existing workforce, companies, and potential employees. Opinions are almost unanimous that skills shortages are looming, and have already arrived in some sectors, although employer response to these shortages varies. The first response tends to focus on the existing workforce through skills training, which often includes addressing language and essential skills challenges. No opportunity exists within the ELT initiative, however, to support programs that are in the workplace, unless they are composed primarily of immigrants at CLB levels 7 and higher. Employers are reticent to create the work culture divisions that result from separating people by immigration status.

The CLBC's *Viewpoints 2002* research identified a disconnect between employer knowledge of skills shortages and the potential of using immigrant recruitment as the solution. A consistent and oft-repeated message was that employers are not educators, and a common position was that language training should occur off-site and before employees are hired. Consequently, even employers who are willing to recruit foreign-trained workers expect that they will arrive fully trained in the technical and language sense. While employers are prepared to work with their existing workforce to ensure necessary skill levels, which includes language skills – if implementation is made relatively effortless – new hires are expected to "hit the ground running." Employers do not see themselves in the language training business for non-employees.

Barriers:

For many employers, avoidance is the path of least resistance, as it tends to be easier to screen out applicants on language, or terminate workers with language challenges in the hope that other workers can replace them. Responding positively to language issues requires actions that are not always easy for employers to undertake.

There is, however, an understanding of how language is interconnected with work and other workplace issues. In some cases, language issues were indistinguishable from health and safety and other regulatory issues. Government programs that take a one-dimensional approach language limit the types of possible intervention, and are less appealing to employers that tend to shy away from programs that appear to have no business value.

There are, however, generic challenges to employers mounting government-sponsored programs, which include an aversion to the rules and paperwork required for funding and the cost of supporting a government-sponsored program.

Many employers were unaware of where to find assistance for workplace language challenges. The few practitioners that are active in this area are constrained by program set-up costs for individual employers. Very few provincial governments or trade associations provide support for the infrastructure necessary to market the programs and lead employers through the development process for language training.

Employers often lack critical mass in terms of participants to make occupation-specific language training viable at the workplace; this holds true for community programs. Significant numbers are needed to conduct an occupation-specific program, and when demand drops off, the program is often discontinued. This also was a criticism of the bridging model approach, for which large numbers are trained when shortages are significant, while the inefficiency of training small numbers renders them impractical.

The research revealed conflicting information on financing language training. For example, employers often will provide off-site language training, in the form of one-to-one tutoring or accent reduction classes, for professional or skilled employees, who are at the ELT target levels. The cost of outsourcing is generally lower than what is involved in creating a program and applying for ELT funding. On the other hand, some employers, who generally had tight profit margins, indicated that any employer contribution constitutes a barrier. In Manitoba, it has taken years for companies to take over all of the funding for a program, although a sliding scale – along with the support of dedicated government officials – has shifted the risk away from the company in the early years. In Alberta, the AFPA found that, even with its Skills Development fund, take-up has been slow, which suggests that money is only one challenge in mounting training programs.

The research also highlighted barriers faced by workers – as even where employers or unions offer programs, workers face difficulties in attending. Many immigrants balance multiple jobs, childcare, and transportation, and often lack the time or energy to learn. All too often immigrants enter directly into employment and become ineligible for federal language training in

later years, when they have more capacity to learn. Canadian workplaces are filled with immigrants and new Canadians who entered the country as dependents or family class. These people are not at a level where ELT can benefit them, but their LINC eligibility has also expired. In addition, once immigrants become citizens, which certainly is desirable, they are no longer eligible for LINC or ELT.

Challenges:

The issues of integrating immigrant workers and responding to the language needs of the existing work force are low on the business and labour agenda, although they carry a higher priority among sector councils, labour training centres, and practitioners in general. To affect change, many suggested that it is necessary to raise awareness among employers and forge a connection between language/skills issues and workplace, productivity, and viability issues.

Another challenge manifests itself in the caution that the language issue and reliance on immigrant skilled workers must be approached in a balanced fashion given the large young aboriginal populations in the western provinces, who represent a means of filling skills shortages and, in the opinion of many, ought to be given precedence over immigrants.

Similarly, labour informants highlighted the major challenges involved in balancing the needs of Canadian workers and immigrants. As an alternative to addressing skills shortages with immigrants, another approach is likely to resonate significantly more: turning to unemployed and underemployed Canadians who have un- or under-used skills.

In sum, while employers, labour unions, and sector councils face a number of needs, barriers, and challenges in the delivery of ELT, some promising approaches are emerging.

7.2 Models, Best Practices, and Approaches

As outlined in section 6 of this report, employers and employer associations are working on the language issue in one of two ways. The first model is a partnership with language providers and/or regulatory bodies, in which employers provide work experience. The second model focuses on delivery of language training in the workplace, which is enabled by an outside agency (usually supported by the provincial government), for which all workers are eligible without reference to immigration status. Some lessons learned are outlined below.

Make It Easy

Consistently, the theme of making it easy was heard – for employers and workers – and approaches that do this appear to be working well. For example, in Manitoba, government fieldworkers are available to employers to help identify needs and establish programs. These fieldworkers actively promote language and literacy training in their communities, promote the services to employers through individual visits and presentations, and facilitate the development of programs and practitioners. In effect, they represent a single window for assistance with language issues in the workplace.

The AFPA model also makes it easy in that, as the industry organization, it has the best understanding of the industry's needs. It has been able to weave language skills into other issues of concern to the industry, and it has worked aggressively to raise language and essential skills on the industry's agenda. This increased profile has had the additional effect of the provincial government creating a Skills Development fund.

Infrastructure support is a critical part of making it easy, as the risks associated with this model become apparent when financial support for infrastructure is withdrawn. For example, Nova Scotia's HILC lacks the support needed for a full-time workplace language manager, and so opportunities to market the program and establish the partnerships have been curtailed.

The creation of a direct delivery support fund also appears to be useful, however, its existence does not guarantee its use. Other important factors include: direct contact with external support personnel to provide guidance; the degree of complexity in accessing funding (forms, accounting, reporting); and how well the fund is promoted.

The Importance of Workplace Context in Language Training

The importance of context cannot be understated, and involves more than using workplace material. It also requires an understanding of the workplace culture, as well as support for supervisors and co-workers. Curricula for good practice models integrate language into all workplace training, and such models need to be supported and broadly disseminated.

The practitioner's role is critical, as workplace training differs from training in college or community based settings. The multitude of clients beyond the learner, the frequently odd hours, and the non-traditional classroom settings demand increased support for practitioners. These factors have a direct impact on practitioners' understanding and ability to utilise principles of good practice such as organizational needs assessments and basing curricula on authentic workplace materials.

Beyond Settlement: Language Training is a Skills Issue

Successful workplace language programs do not distinguish between participants based on immigration status. In some cases, the provincial government provides additional support and in others, it is the industry norm. Workers can fully understand that some of their colleagues might be tapped to take a language or a communications program based on their language skills. It is not as apparent when the training needs to be given only to immigrants.

To mitigate the potential for pitting immigrants against citizens, good practice integrates language into all workplace training. Nevertheless, restrictive present ELT rules may discourage integrated approaches to workplace language training.

In conclusion, good practice rises above the limitations imposed by governments. Efforts to "make it easy" were critical to successful program – which underscores the importance of the positive response from sector councils who are in a position to make it easy. While they face

delivery challenges in terms of overcoming the eligibility restrictions, they are in a position to utilize ELT resources to develop their own sector-specific language training programs.

7.3 Key Considerations for Moving Ahead

Work with All Stakeholders

The concerted effort required to work with workplace stakeholders includes outreach and awareness raising based on a sound business case for involvement in workplace language training. In communities such as Ottawa and Toronto, initiatives that fully incorporate business and labour perspectives have gone a long way towards putting language and immigration on the business/labour agenda, and more of these efforts are needed.

Another issue that needs attention concerns the costs employers incur from involvement in workplace experience programs, which include lost time for learners and mentors, insurance, and others. These costs require more explicit consideration, and co-workers need more support to be mentors. Research on the cost of offering placements for immigrants might be helpful so that we can make a business case to employers to provide work experience to immigrants. This will particularly be of concern in those cases where the immigrants are not members of professions where the professional association can help to facilitate the placement.

It is clear from the research that employers on their own will not mount ELT programs. Sector councils could be better engaged to integrate language issues into their training agenda. Whether councils will actively deliver language training will depend on their mandate and structure. It is clear, however, that whatever is delivered will need to be based on sector context. It is encouraging that so many councils have expressed an interest in benchmarking occupations, which is the start of a comprehensive system that will enable employers to hire based on objective assessments of language requirements.

While trade and industry associations can be partners in curriculum development and work placements, they require the involvement of language providers to deal with ESL issues.

Union training centres, which are active in several training areas including ESL, have been underutilized as a language training resource for the employed, unemployed, and underemployed.

Infrastructure Support

Since the programs funding changes of the 1990s, fewer workplace language practitioners have remained active. Professional development is needed to update practitioners on workplace-based training and working with workplace stakeholders. This type of training could be mounted by CIC in partnership with business, labour, and sector councils to ensure that the workplace perspective is properly presented.

The present ELT initiative supports development and delivery, but not the infrastructure necessary to provide hands-on support for employer involvement. Infrastructure support

includes professional development, knowledge development, promotion and outreach, as well as fieldworkers to work with the private sector, which is critical for making it easy to become involved.

A useful initiative might be to work with employers so that jobs can be benchmarked according to the Canadian Language Benchmarks. This would eliminate the need to have an employer make an independent assessment of either the job applicant's or the positions language requirements. It would also assist in helping immigrants integrate more quickly into the labour force.

Language Training Based on Need

A system that provides language training based on need rather than on a time limit or immigration status would be more effective. The present system, which provides lower level language training to immigrants who landed within three years, and higher-level language training to immigrants, targets only two groups that need support. It is clear that opportunities are limited for immigrants who landed more than three years ago, for workers who are below the ELT levels, and for new Canadians. Language programs for these people are offered at some school boards and colleges – some of which are free (depending on the province). While employers are free to pay for workplace programs, there is little activity outside provinces with financial support. In addition, training programs for the unemployed generally do not consider ESL as a *bone fide* activity.

The ELT initiative should be positioned within the context of the federal government's Skills and Learning strategy with cooperation among departments to ensure that all learning needs are addressed. As it stands, the ELT initiative appears to provide no relief for workplace challenges, which are of most direct concern to employers and unions.

For people who are not yet employed, the ELT initiative is well suited to the needs of regulatory bodies, industry associations, sector councils, and language providers. In this context, employers are best to take an advisory role regarding the workplace elements of the training and provide work placements. The ELT can also be effective when a sector identifies a specific shortage for which foreign-trained workers can be recruited and provided with ESL training.

The research presented here gives a good indication of the myriad of needs, barriers, and challenges facing business, and sector councils in considering delivering ELT. Employers in particular do not see themselves in the language training business and expect that immigrants they hire to fill skills shortages will have all of the requisite skills before entering the workplace. Even when businesses want to mount programs, there are few resources available to them in terms of practitioners, program design, and financial support. Learning while working whether the learning is on the job, at a union centre or at a college is difficult for workers who are juggling multiple jobs, family obligations and integrating into a new country. Industry in general is not aware of how to connect language issues with workplace objectives. There might be some opportunities to mount programs in conjunction with sector councils or labour unions, but less likely with individual employers.

Our research led to three main features needed to make ELT successful. First, any program has to 'make it easy' for the employer, the union and the worker. Several models were featured in the report that involved support to companies – financial and technical – to enable companies to launch programs. Second, programs must take place within the context of the workplace. Language cannot be separated from the reality of work – from issues such as gender, diversity, and power. Finally, models that work do not distinguish among workers by their immigration status – rather they position language as a skills issue.

We believe that by working with all stakeholders, by providing infrastructure support, and by enabling a language training system that is based on need not immigration status will form the foundation of a successful ELT initiative.

Glossary[21]

Academic Bridging/Upgrading/English for Academic Purposes

Programs that assist/bridge ESL students towards posts-secondary educational programs. They usually focus on developing specific skills and knowledge in one or more areas such as math, biology, English, literature. Courses may be offered through classroom instruction, self-paced programming and computer assisted learning. Students are placed into courses according to their needs, career goals, and results of the CLB assessment and/or other placement tests.

Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)

The Canadian Language Benchmarks outline stages of proficiency for reading, listening, writing, and speaking. It is the national standard for ESL training. On the next page, you will find an overview of the benchmarks.

English as a Second Language (ESL)

English as a Second Language classes focus on reading, writing, listening and speaking for basic to advanced level ESL. These classes are primary non-academic (with the exception of more advanced levels) and are fee based.

ESL with Literacy Support

Programs are designed to assist those learners in ESL programs with low levels of first language literacy in reading and writing, basic math and other skills normally developed in formal educational settings. This also includes learners who are literate in their own language but not familiar with the Roman alphabet.

English in the Workplace Program (EWP)

EWP is an ESL program offered on the worksite. It usually focuses on specific English language skills and vocabulary related to the workplace. It is designed to help employees to improve their English and their ability to function in an English-speaking environment. The employer may allow time off for employees during their lunch period or any other suitable time, such as before or after work. This instruction is usually done on a contract basis between an ESL service provided and the employer.

Enhanced Language Training

ELT is administered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and is aimed at improving the language skills of those at CLB levels 7 and above. Funding is available for development project (curriculum, assessment tools, research) and for delivery.

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[21] Many of these definitions were taken from Calgary Immigrant Aid Society. "Definitions for the various ESL streams." http://www.calgaryimmigrantaid.ca/esldirectory.asp.

LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada)

LINC is a federally funded language training program, free of charge for immigrants and refugees over 16 years of age who are non-Canadian citizens and meet all eligibility requirements. Learners fall between levels 1 and 5 of the CLBs and cannot have been resident in Canada for more than five years, although priority is given to those with less than three years residency. There is a maximum number of hours that can be taken under LINC training. LINC is also known as ELSA (English Language Services for Adults) in British Columbia.

Canadian Language Benchmarks Overview[22]

The CLBs describe three stages of language proficiency. Within each stage, there are four benchmarks:

Stages	Proficiency	Benchmark	General Description of Language Proficiency
Stage I	Basic Proficiency	1	Beginners. May be able to copy text accurately in order to fill in personal information forms. Can recognise single vocabulary items or short phrases. May be able to recognise and say the numbers and letters in order to identify them. May respond to familiar greetings.
		2	
		3	Simple structure is mastered at this stage. Messages are short and are limited to very basic, daily routine situations. There are frequent errors and often a need for clarification and repetition. Can read and write very short simple texts with recognisable spelling and punctuation. Vocabulary is quite limited.
		4	
Stage II	Intermediate Proficiency	5	At this point, the second language learner can handle familiar, everyday situations in the community or at the workplace. They are able to ask for explanations, clarify their meaning, listen to short talks or read about a variety of subjects. Errors in pronunciation, grammar, spelling and punctuation may cause misunderstanding at times.
		6	
		7	Learners have mastered the more complex grammatical structures and have expanded vocabulary to comfortable speak and write on a wide variety of everyday topics. They can identify levels of formality and adjust their language to familiar situations. They can offer opinions and advice properly. They can read texts of up to 10 pages on familiar topics or follow complex instructions. They are beginning to use language for academic purposes.
		8	
Stage III	Advanced Proficiency	9	Learner is no longer learning to read, write and listen; rather s/he is reading, writing and listening to learn. The learner is conscious of how language is used to persuade and influence and can begin to develop an appreciation for literary style and nuance. This is the level of much high school English, and identified by Red River College (Manitoba) for many of its training programmes.
		10	
		11	Learner uses English at a very high level, higher than average mainstream speakers of English. Able to cope with academic, business, social and technical situations. Can negotiate and manage conflictive situations, write proposals, persuasive articles, research papers and abstracts, read and view authentic materials for pleasure. Can evaluate and revise the writing of others.
		12	

[22] Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000; Lisa Petit, Adult Language Training Branch, Manitoba Labour and Immigration

Annex A: List of People Consulted

Mary Ellen Belfiore
ESL Practitioner
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Annex B: Interview Questions

Verify name, title, and organization.

What is your experience with English in the workplace programs?

What are the characteristics of good programs?

What supports are available to businesses for English in the workplace programs? (Funding, practitioners, development support.)

Do you know of occupation-specific curriculum that exists?

Examples of best practices

In your opinion, is one method more effective than another –e.g. on the job training vs. community-based or institution-based training?

Are there practitioners who are specialists in this area that we should talk to?

Do you know of any businesses that provide ESL training in their workplaces?

If you found that your workplace had language issues, who would you call?

What do you consider to be best practices in this area?

Annex C: Sector Council Survey

The Canadian Labour and Business Centre is undertaking a project entitled: "Research towards understanding Business, Labour and Sector Council needs and challenges related to Enhanced Language Training (ELT)", funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). The objectives of the project are:

- To identify, understand, and analyse the needs, barriers, and challenges facing sector councils, business and labour regarding occupation-specific language training and to assess current capacity in order to support the delivery of ELT.
- To identify models, best practices, and approaches in delivering both occupation-specific language training and Canadian work experience programs that can illustrate how some industry needs are already being met effectively in this area.
- To identify key considerations for developing realistic, practical, and valid approaches to occupation-specific language training in partnership with workplace stakeholders that can be used by CIC, by provinces and territories and by community based language-training providers.

The federal budget (February 2003) provided for an allocation of $5 million per year toward the development and implementation of cost-sharing projects to provide higher levels of language training, including labour market specific language training for adult immigrants. Through cost sharing and seed funding projects, CIC expects that partners will design, deliver, and fund higher levels of language training. The higher levels of language training will include the labour market specific language training that skilled immigrants need in order to practice in their field of expertise (e.g., nursing, engineering, etc.)

The Canadian Labour and Business Centre (CLBC), a national multipartite forum for labour market issues, is providing CIC with an overview of the issues related to occupation-specific and work-related language training. The CLBC's study will examine the question of language levels required for entry into the workplace (training generally provided outside of the workplace) and that of language training requirements for incumbent workers, which might be provided as part of a workplace training strategy.

We are seeking the input of sector councils on a number of research questions to help the CLBC understand better the question of language of work. Your assistance is greatly appreciated. You will receive a copy of the final report once it is completed in the spring.

Thank you for your participation. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact: Brigid Hayes, Senior Researcher, CLBC, 613-234-0505, ext. 246, or b.hayes@clbc.ca.

SECTOR COUNCIL SURVEY
Enhanced Language Training

1. Name of sector council:

   _____

2. Name of representative answering this survey:

   _____

3. How familiar are you with the Canadian Language Benchmarks?

   Very ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all ☐

The Canadian Language Benchmarks define language proficiency for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at 12 benchmark levels as follows:

Basic proficiency (CLB levels 1-4) – ability to communicate in common and predictable context and within the area of basic needs, common everyday activities, and familiar topics of immediate personal relevance.
Sample Tasks at CLB 4:
Reading: able to read simple instructions, classified ads, coupons, flyers
Writing: can write short messages, fill out simple forms
Speaking: can take part in short routine conversations
Listening: can understand many common everyday instructions and directions related to the immediate context

Intermediate proficiency (CLB levels 5-8) – abilities required to function independently in most familiar situation situations of daily, social, educational, and work-related life experience, and in some less predictable contexts.
Sample Tasks at CLB 8:
Reading: can read newspaper, magazines, popular fiction, academic and business materials
Writing: can write routine business letters, personal and formal social messages, fill out complex formatted documents
Speaking: can participate in conversations with confidence, reasonably fluent in discourse
Listening: can follow clear and coherent extended instructional texts and directions, or phone messages on unfamiliar and non-routine matters

Advanced proficiency (CLB levels 9-12) – the range of abilities required to communicate effectively, appropriately, accurately and fluently in most context, topics and situations from predicable to unfamiliar, and from general to professionally specific, in most communicatively demanding contexts.
Sample Tasks at CLB 10
Reading: can search through complex displays of information and use high-level inference to locate and integrate several specific pieces of abstract information

Writing: can write technical, commercial, organizational or academic messages such as letters, faxes, memos, emails, short formal reports
Speaking: can actively participate in formal meetings, interviews or seminars about complex, abstract, conceptual and detailed topics
Listening: can follow formal and informal discourse on most general interest and technical topics in own field, delivered at a normal rate of speech

For more information about the Canadian Language Benchmarks go to www.language.ca

4. Using the above grid, what would you say is the level of official language (language of the workplace) proficiency for entry-level positions in your sector for reading and writing?

Unskilled	Basic	☐	Intermediate	☐	Advanced	☐
Skilled	Basic	☐	Intermediate	☐	Advanced	☐
Profession/Trade	Basic	☐	Intermediate	☐	Advanced	☐

5. Using the above grid, what is the level of proficiency for oral communications (speaking and listening) for within workplaces in your sector?

Unskilled	Basic	☐	Intermediate	☐	Advanced	☐
Skilled	Basic	☐	Intermediate	☐	Advanced	☐
Profession/Trade	Basic	☐	Intermediate	☐	Advanced	☐

6. Are there specific language requirements e.g. test scores for work in your sector that are established by a professional body or a licensing agency?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, please indicate the name of the body/agency that establishes these language requirements or tests used to determine if the requirement is met?

_____

7. Has your sector council developed a training program or resources aimed at improving the language skills of workers?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, would you be willing to share information about the program or resources with the CLBC for the purpose of this project?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(If yes, a representative of the CLBC will be in contact with you)

8. Are you aware of any companies within your sector that support language training in the workplace?

   If so, would you be willing to provide their names to the CLBC for the purpose of this study?

   Yes ☐ No ☐

   (If yes, you will be contacted by a member of the CLBC team)

9. How important would you say language issues are in terms of the overall human resources strategy for your sector?

   Very ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all ☐

   If so, what are some of the pressing issues?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

10. Would there be a benefit in having an occupation-specific or sector-specific language programs for your sector?

    Yes ☐ No ☐

11. Would your sector council be interested in using the Canadian Language Benchmarks to establish guidelines for occupational language requirements?

    Yes ☐ No ☐

    (If you are, a representative of the CLBC will contact you.)

12. In your opinion, would employers in your sector be interested to participate in delivering language training in their workplace?

    Yes ☐ No ☐

13. Would they be interested in doing so if there was a requirement for a 50% financial contribution?

    Yes ☐ No ☐

14. Would your sector council be willing to participate in an in-depth interview about the issues related to language at work for the purposes of this project?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(If you are, a representative of the CLBC will contact you.)

Thank you for your participation.

Annex D: Sector Council Focus Group Questions

Focus Group with Sector Councils
Tuesday May 4, 2004
9:30 – 11:30 a.m.
340 MacLaren Street
Ottawa, ON

9:30 – 9:45 – Introductions; purpose and context of the focus group

9:45 – 11:15 – Specific questions to address

a) We heard from many of you that language is a very important issue for your sector and about some of the ways that you are dealing with the issue. We would like to hear more from you about the ways in which your sector is responding, e.g. training programs, testing, and partnerships with other organizations. What are some of the more innovative initiatives in your sector?

b) Imagine if you will, that the federal government was able to provide funding to employers to offer language-training courses in their workplaces, as long as the employers contributed 50% of the costs (this could be in-kind). How do you think the employers in your sector would respond to this? What proportion of employers in your industry (of your membership?) would implement language programs? What if the program was available only to immigrants? What if it was only available to professional level employees? What would it take to get a significant number of employers implement language programs?

c) To integrate immigrants into workplaces quickly requires occupational specific language training and Canadian work experience. What role do you see for your council in facilitating and/or delivering a program that would provide these services to your sector? To what extent does your council already have the capacity to take on such a role? What additional resources would you need?

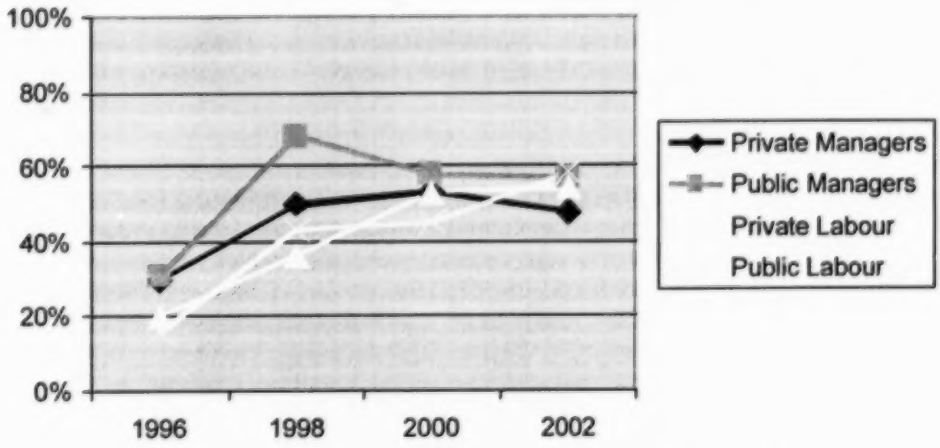
11:15 – 11:30 – Wrap-up and next steps

Annex E: Background Analysis of Data

Growing Concern about Skill Shortages

The Canadian Labour and Business Centre's *Viewpoints 2002* leadership survey included a new focus on the looming skill shortages issue. Tracking since 1996 shows there has been a significant increase in levels of concern with this human resource challenge among all four of our target communities – managers and labour leaders in the public and private sectors. All four survey sectors have recorded a steep increase in those viewing skill shortages as a serious problem – with public sector labour leaders showing the most dramatic shift, going from 17% in 1996 to 59% in 2002.

Figure 5: Percentage of Managers and Labour Leaders saying Shortage of Skilled Labour is a Serious Problem Facing the Canadian Economy and Labour Market, CLBC Viewpoints 2002



Viewpoints 2002 Leadership Survey respondents were asked to consider a broad range of issues facing the Canadian economy and labour market. The issues probed ranged from international competitiveness, to health care to unemployment. In total, we presented 39 different issues to determine how respondents viewed each issue whether it was "not a problem," a "moderate problem" or a "serious problem." Based on the percentage saying "serious problem," the issue of skill shortages was among the top ten concerns of both managers and labour leaders.

Table 8: How Skill Shortages Rank as an Issue of Serious Concern, CLBC Viewpoints 2002

Leadership	Shortage of Skilled Labour Rank Among 39 Issues*	Percent viewing shortage of skilled labour as a "serious problem"
Public Sector Managers	# 2	57%
Private Sector Managers	# 5	48%
Public Sector Labour	# 9	59%
Private Sector Labour	# 10	55%
* Ranking is based on the percent of leaders viewing issues as a "serious problem."		

The skill shortages issue is seen as a serious problem by about one half of all respondents – and across all four of our survey sectors – private sector business and labour, public sector managers and labour. Very few said it was "not a problem" – about 10% in each group. To summarize, approximately 90% of managers and labour leaders surveyed ranked skill shortages as either a moderate or serious problem.

Managers and labour leaders throughout all sectors of the economy view a shortage of skilled labour as a "serious problem." Whether in construction, manufacturing, education or health care, a large share, very often a majority, say the issue is a serious problem facing the economy and labour market.

Table 9: Percentage of Managers and Labour Leaders Saying Shortage of Skilled Labour is a Serious Problem, by selected Industry Sectors

	Managers (%)	Labour Leaders (%)
Private Sector		
Construction	53	52
Resources / Communications / Utilities	49	58
Manufacturing	44	61
Services	41	61
Transportation and Wholesale Trade	57	42
Public Sector		
Education	58	61
Health Care	61	77
Government (all levels)	49	36

Just as the shortage of skilled labour is seen as a problem across industry sectors, it is also viewed as an issue of concern across the country. What provincial/regional differences do exist are, for the most part, a matter of degree. Managers in Quebec have the highest levels of concern in the private and public sector, 57% and 71% respectively. British Columbia reported the lowest levels of concern among managers – 44% for private sector managers and 40% among public sector managers.

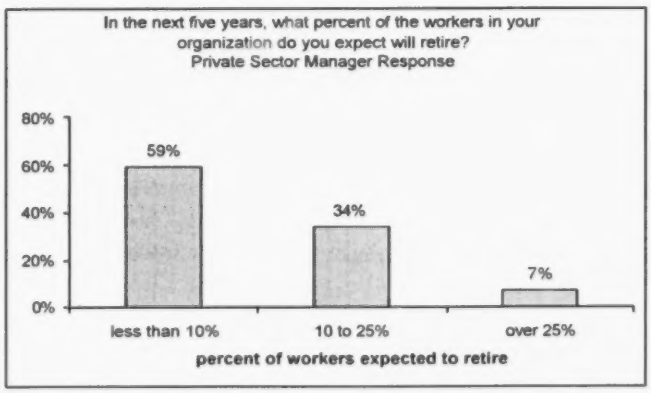
Regional trends among labour leaders were less clear. For example, the lowest level of concern among private sector labour leaders was just 42% in the Atlantic Provinces – in contrast to the above average levels of concern found among public sector labour leaders in that region – 61%.

The elevated concern about skill shortages is related, at least in part, to two key labour force trends. The Canadian labour force is growing more slowly, and is ageing. Movement of the 'baby boom' generation into their late 40s and 50s, combined with fewer young labour force entrants has meant that Canadian workers 45 years of age and over formed an increasing share of the labour force during the 1990s. In 1990, this group formed about 26 per cent of the labour force, but by 2002, their share had risen to 34 per cent[23].

In some sectors of the economy, the proportion of the currently employed population aged 45 and over is nearing 50%. Combined with a median retirement aged that has declined from 64.7% in 1984 to 60.6% in 2002, the prospect of a large and rapid exit of retiring workers in the coming decade has (not surprisingly) raised concerns in many quarters about current and future labour shortages, especially of skilled workers and professionals. Numerous industry associations and sector councils, including those in health care, education, construction, transportation, and manufacturing, are examining the issue of skill shortages, and developing strategies to address human resource requirements.

The CLBC's *Viewpoints 2002* survey found that most private sector managers (59%) expect that less than 10% of the workers in their respective organizations will retire within five years time. This is, in fact, consistent with what we know about the age structure of the current labour force. Our analysis of Labour Force Survey data showed that in 2002, 9.1% of private sector employees were aged 55 and over. With the average retirement age around 61, many of these workers will retire within five years time.

Figure 6



[23] Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Historical Review 2002*. CD-ROM Catalogue 71F0004XCB.

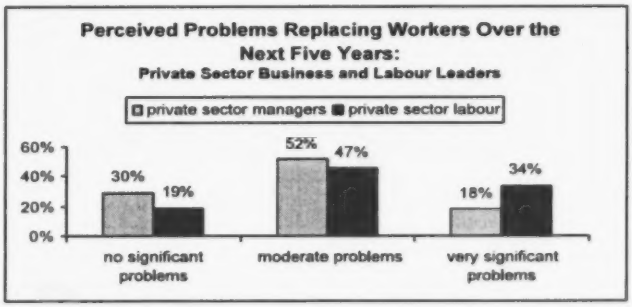
However, one-third (34%) of private sector managers expect between 10 and 25% of their firm's workers to retire within five years. This too is consistent with what we know about the age profile of certain sectors of the economy. For example, construction and transportation are two industry sectors characterized by relatively large near-retirement populations. Seven percent of private sector managers – about one in fourteen – expect more than 25% of their workforce will retire within five years time.

The retirement issue is more pressing in the public sector, where the workforce is both older, and retires earlier. Of the public sector managers we surveyed in *Viewpoints 2002*, 21% – one in five – said they expected more than 25% of their workforce to retire within five years time. Another 52% said somewhere between 10 and 25% of their workforces would likely retire within five years.

The majority of managers and labour leaders in the private and public sectors expect to face problems replacing retiring workers in the next five years. Over 70 percent of leaders anticipate either moderate or very significant problems replacing workers in the wake of the baby boom exit to retirement.

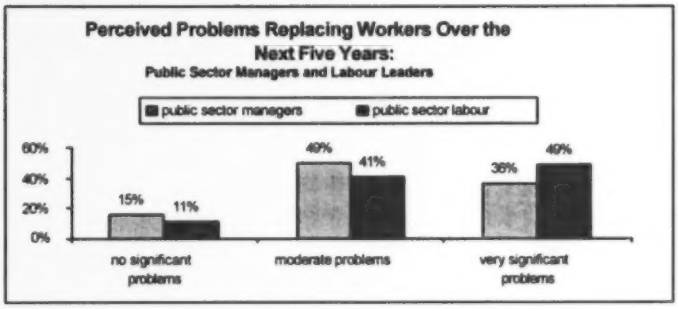
In the private sector, about one in five business leaders (18%) anticipate very significant workforce replacement problems. An additional 52% expect moderate problems replacing workers, while just under one-third of business leaders (30%) say there will be no significant problems replacing workers. Labour leaders in the private sector are less optimistic about the prospects of replacing workers. Eighty percent see moderate or significant problems replacing workers in the near future. One-third expect significant problems.

Figure 7



Public sector managers are also less optimistic than their private sector counterparts. Among this group, 85% see moderate or significant workforce replacement problems, with over one-third (36%) seeing significant problems in the next five years. Labour leaders in the public sector share the same view as managers. Nine out of ten public sector labour leaders in the *Viewpoints 2002* survey said organizations where their members work will face moderate or significant problems replacing workers. Nearly one-half (49%) said significant problems can be expected.

Figure 8



The expectation that there will be problems replacing retiring workers is widely held, by managers and labour leaders throughout all sectors of the economy. There are certain sectors however, where the concern about replacing retiring workers is particularly high. In the construction sector for example, 85% of managers said they expected problems replacing workers in the next five years. One in five construction sector managers (22%) said they expected "very significant problems."

In the public sector, almost all managers of educational and health care institutions expect problems replacing workers (90% and 88% respectively). A very high proportion of managers in these two sectors expect to face "very significant" worker replacement problems over the next five years (41% of education sector managers and 55% of health care sector managers).

Table 10: Percentage of Managers and Labour Leaders Expecting Problems Replacing Workers in the Next Five Years, by Selected Industry Sectors, Viewpoints 2002

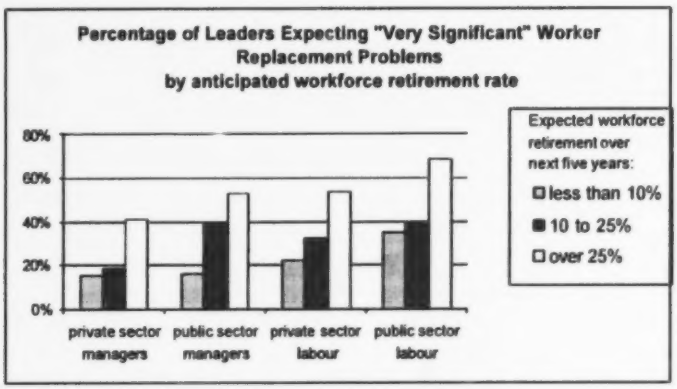
	Managers (%)	Labour Leaders (%)
Private Sector		
Construction	85	71
Resources / Communications / Utilities	75	89
Manufacturing	69	86
Services	68	68
Transportation and Wholesale Trade	58	82
Public Sector		
Education	90	88
Health Care	88	92
Government (all levels)	73	89

The proportion of business and labour leaders who expect very significant problems replacing retiring workers over the coming five year period is clearly related to the number of workers they expect will be retiring in that period. When leaders see large numbers of their people retiring in the near-term, they are very likely to expect significant problems of worker replacement.

Among private sector managers who expect less than 10% of their workers to retire in the next five years (a view held by six out of ten private sector managers), only 15% expect to face "very significant problems" replacing workers. However, among private sector managers who expect more than one quarter of their workforce to retire in the next five years (a view held by one in fourteen private sector managers) – 41% say they will face very significant problems of worker replacement.

The same kind of relationship between perceived levels of retirement and perceived problems replacing workers pertains to all four groups of business and labour leaders. For example, among public sector managers who expect less than 10% of their workforce to retire in the next five years, only 16% anticipate very significant problems of worker replacement. However, when the retirement picture is seen as involving more than one quarter of their workforce, 53% say they expect very significant worker replacement problems.

Figure 9



It is not surprising that business and labour leaders who expect a large share of their current workforce to retire in the near future should be more likely to anticipate worker replacement problems. Does this mean that workplaces with relatively low levels of retirement in the coming years should be unconcerned about replacing workers? Perhaps. However, it is important to keep in mind that all workplaces will be competing for the same pool of available talent. This means that firms looking to replace less than 10% of their workforce will be competing in the labour market with firms who are looking to replace a quarter or more of their workforce.

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